The Nation.

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Eric Alterman

ALL THAT JAZZ
David Yaffe

WHAT CAN SHERROD BROWN DO FOR THE DEMOCRATS?

by JOHN NICHOLS

TOBER 2, 2006
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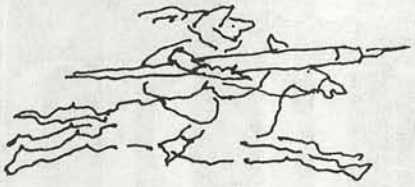

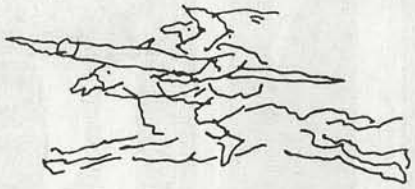

R.O. BLECHMAN

MILITARY FAMILY DIARY

Hillsborough, NC

■ We said goodbye to our son at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and that night saw the cruise missiles strike Baghdad for the start of "Shock and Awe." Day after day we heard the reports of soldiers being killed. Hoping that our son hadn't died wasn't an option, because that would be wishing the death onto another family. All we could do was hold hands with military families and grieve together. Each soldier who dies is our son or daughter.

Our son came home, but our nephew is in his third tour in Iraq. From their stories and the stories of our military friends, we have come to appreciate the profound compassion they feel for the people of Iraq. They have witnessed families struggling to live without dependable drinking water, electricity, jobs, basic law and order, and on and on. My son, nephew and military friends urgently want to help the people of Iraq. They have seen firsthand families whose needs have stretched on not for weeks or months but for years, in neighborhoods where soldiers are afraid to go and families are prisoners in their own homes—a community that doesn't grieve the loss of two or three loved ones each day, but dozens.

A friend, an officer in military intelligence, recently returned from a year in Iraq. He tells us he didn't see any difference in conditions on the ground over that year. He didn't see a plan to improve conditions or to protect his buddies or Iraqis. Staying the course in Iraq is tearing the military, the Iraqi people and our hearts apart.

Now our son has been reactivated and is on his way back to Iraq. There has been a massive call-back of previously discharged *and* 50-year-old retired soldiers. None of them re-enlisted, and their morale is deplorable. Without acknowledging it, the Bush Administration has instituted a backdoor draft, ending the "all volunteer" army. Not known by most people is the fact that only about half of the soldiers being called back are reporting, as ordered, to support their buddies in Iraq. These veterans are giving us a failing grade for our support of the troops. KENT ALLAN ROBERTSON

SPRAWL: NOT NECESSARILY BAD

Chicago

■ While I appreciate Thomas Sugrue's positive comments on my book *Sprawl: A Compact History*, the way he characterizes it and my approach generally may mislead potential readers ["The Geography of Fear," Feb. 27]. He describes the book as based on a libertarian and free-market ideology and suggests that I approve of sprawl because it is based on the collective result of millions of individuals making choices in an uncontrolled real estate market.

But I don't say that sprawl is good. I only say that it is not necessarily bad and that the problems of development at the edge are no worse than those anywhere else in the urban system. I also don't say that sprawl is the result of laissez-faire capitalism. As I show in my book, this explanation has always been countered by those who have argued cogently just the opposite: that the market, left to itself, would create high densities and that sprawl has been caused by bad government policies—highway construction, single-family zoning and the mortgage income-tax deduction among them.

I don't come down on either side of this argument, because I believe the distinction between market and government is overdrawn by both the right and the left. The real estate market relies on a very strong government framework, and government at all levels is one of the largest players in the market. Consumers are also voters, and they act in similar ways when they decide which house to buy and which candidate to vote for. I am certainly not offended to be called a libertarian, but I doubt that many libertarians would consider me to be part of the fold.

Given his background, it is not surprising that Sugrue's main objection is that I don't believe that sprawl is necessarily a major cause of America's social and racial problems. Following the standard litany of critics of sprawl, he believes that sprawl "causes and perpetuates economic and racial inequalities" and blames white flight from the central cities as a major cause of sprawl.

This standard-issue urban history does nothing to counter my demonstration that sprawl has happened in cities both in the United States and worldwide in much the same way in places with large racial minorities and in places where there are no significant racial minorities. It also fails to account for the fact that American suburbs have become increasingly diverse economically and racially during the past several decades, exactly the years in which, according to critics, sprawl supposedly ran roughshod over the landscape.

Sugrue, for example, suggests that Deerfield, Illinois, which was 96 percent white in the 2000 Census, is typical of America's, or at least Chicago's, postwar suburbia. But among the suburbs within a few miles of Deerfield is Skokie, which was 4.5 percent black and 5.7 percent Hispanic or Latino in 2000, and Evanston, which was 22.5 percent black and 6.1 percent Hispanic or Latino. Looking at the south suburbs, moreover, reveals a large number of suburbs with a majority of African-Americans. In fact, Cook County, outside Chicago, is only 72.7 percent white and 13.6 percent African-American.

Suburban America as a whole has become much more diverse over the past five decades as it has sprawled. A recent Brookings Institution study puts the percentage of the population in America's older suburbs at 33.4 percent nonwhite and Hispanic. Even in the outer suburbs the figure stands at 21 percent. The degree of racial and economic segregation in the Chicago area and elsewhere is regrettable, but fingering white flight as the culprit does little to explain why whites and nonwhites, rich and poor, have fled in much the same way.

Blaming sprawl and the built environment for these problems is similar to blaming the architecture of highrise public housing for the social problems found in these communities. And forcing people back into dense central cities would no more solve racial problems than tearing down highrise public housing will fix the problems faced by the poor minority citizens living in them.

The point of my book was not to defend sprawl or to attack it. It was to take a close look to see if the standard arguments against it stand up. I conclude they don't and attempt to show why. Sugrue's review doesn't engage these arguments. He simply restates his own belief that millions of ordinary citizens have made what he believes are the wrong choices about how they want to live, and sprawl and social inequality are the result. ROBERT BRUEGMANN

SUGRUE REPLIES

Philadelphia

■ Robert Bruegmann is right about one thing: I do believe that people sometimes make wrong choices—often abetted by misguided policymakers—and that those choices can create and perpetuate inequality. America's troubled history of race relations bears that out.

Bruegmann's comments on the diversity of Chicago's suburbs offer a good example of his slippery use of statistics in service of his larger, dubious arguments. You wouldn't know from his rosy picture that Chicago has the second-highest rate of black-white residential segregation of all US metropolitan areas. A closer look at the racial geography of metro Chicago belies his simplistic assumption that black suburbanization equals diversity or equality. It's true that blacks now live in greater numbers than ever before in Chicago suburbs, but most of them live in racially segregated communities with declining tax bases and distressed public schools. Chicago's suburban blacks are clustered in

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EDITORIALS

Lawless 'Compromises'

George W. Bush's decision to move Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and thirteen other "high value" Al Qaeda captives from secret CIA prisons to Guantánamo was treated by much of the press as an abrupt change of course. Big news! The President acknowledged CIA prisons that the public has known about for two years! Reality: The President—in the wake of the Supreme Court's *Hamdan* decision striking down his Administration's post-9/11 military tribunals and faced with the possibility of more lawsuits on behalf of those CIA detainees—is attempting desperate aikido, spinning his eroding legal and political position into yet another assault on the Constitution and civilized values.

Make no mistake: Despite years of rebukes from courts and Congress, Bush remains addicted to a radical vision in which the right to seize and torture abroad and the right to spy on Americans at home are inextricable. In the days surrounding this year's 9/11 anniversary, Bush pulled out all the stops on both the Administration's military commissions bill and its warrantless wiretapping plan, an election-season push that left his Republican allies in knots.

By moving those fourteen prisoners to Guantánamo, the White House hoped to force the hand of reluctant Senate Republicans on the military commissions bill, which would undo *Hamdan* and put Congress in direct defiance of international law. Bush's bill would authorize the United States to seize people anywhere in the world, deny Guantánamo captives habeas corpus review and exempt the CIA from military restrictions on interrogation—read: torture. It would deny prisoners the right to examine evidence against them—the cornerstone of justice around the world. At the same time, the White House has proposed amendments to undermine the War Crimes Act of 1996. According to the *Washington Post*, CIA officers are now so concerned about being prosecuted for illegal interrogations that they're subscribing in droves to special government-sponsored insurance against war crimes claims.

John McCain and other Republican senators who have stood up against torture and Guantánamo found themselves caught between their revulsion at the President's bill and their fear of seeming to be aligned with Democrats in an election season. At press time McCain and his allies appeared dangerously close to conceding to the White House on the fundamental matter of secret evidence even while holding their ground, for now, on efforts to redefine the provision of the Geneva Conventions that broadly guarantees humane treatment of detainees. But secret evidence inevitably turns any tribunal into a one-sided show trial, as true in Guantánamo as it would have been had Hanoi "tried" POW McCain. This is no time for compromise, Senator.

Meanwhile, Arlen Specter was leading Senate Republicans into an equally dangerous compromise over warrantless wiretapping, blocking modest Democratic amendments to require reviews of the program. Specter's "compromise" amounts to a blatantly unconstitutional plan to grant the special foreign surveillance court one-time review of the warrantless wiretap program—in effect depriving the Supreme Court of its constitutionally mandated role. The best hope to defeat the wiretap bill is in the House, where some Republicans perceive the spying plan as a danger to their re-election.

In his speech about the CIA fourteen and in his September 11 address, Bush once again used the crimes of Al Qaeda to defend his lawless policies at home and abroad. No election issue is more pressing than the principle that torture and eavesdropping are un-American, and that we are a nation founded on the rule of law. We hope the GOP Congressional supporters of the Geneva Conventions and of civil rights keep their nerve—and that Democrats don't fall into a pre-election national security trap.

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A Scandal If Not a Crime

White House supporters have jumped on the news that former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage was the first Bush Administration official to tell conservative columnist Robert Novak in July 2003 that the wife of former Ambassador Joseph Wilson—who'd enraged the White House by challenging its handling of prewar intelligence—was a CIA employee working on WMD issues. Aha, the right-wingers exclaim, the White House, including Karl Rove, has been besmirched by critics who cite the CIA leak as proof of Rovian thuggery. Apologize, they demand, and give Karl back his good name.

This magazine has a special relationship to the story. An article by Washington editor David Corn first raised the possibility that the Novak leak was evidence of a White House crime. And a new book Corn wrote with *Newsweek*'s Michael Isikoff, *Hubris: The Inside Story of Spin, Scandal, and the Selling of the Iraq War*, first revealed Armitage to be the leaker—and Valerie Wilson to have been operations chief of the CIA's Joint Task Force on Iraq.

The political and media establishments have embraced the Armitage scoop while ignoring the book's key contention that the affair was a window into the much bigger scandal of the Administration's use of faulty intelligence—a scandal further documented in the recent Senate report on Iraq. Armitage was not part of a White House effort to assail Joseph Wilson, but this doesn't mean there was no campaign to discredit a high-level critic. The record is clear: Rove and Scooter Libby also leaked to reporters about Valerie Wilson. Rove confirmed the leak for Novak and days later passed the same secret information to Matt Cooper of *Time*. "Scooter and Karl are out of control," one White House aide told another. And in a court filing, special counsel Patrick Fitzgerald noted that White House officials had engaged in a "concerted action" to "discredit, punish or seek revenge against" Wilson.

Bush apologists have used the Armitage news to slam Fitzgerald: Since he knew at the start that Armitage was the original leaker, they ask, why did he waste our time (and taxpayer dollars) for more than two years? The answer: Armitage quickly confessed his role to FBI investigators; Libby and Rove did not. Libby claimed he'd merely shared scuttlebutt from some reporters with other reporters. (The Libby indictment notes that he and Dick Cheney gathered information and that Libby then disclosed it to two reporters.) Rove first told investigators he'd confirmed the leak with Novak; for a year, he refused to acknowledge he'd leaked to Cooper. Fitzgerald ultimately concluded he couldn't indict anyone for violating the law that makes it illegal for government officials to reveal information about undercover CIA officers. He would have had to prove that these leakers knew beyond a reasonable doubt that Valerie Wilson was undercover.

But no crime committed (other than Libby's alleged obstruction of justice) doesn't mean no harm done. The White House behaved in an ugly and unethical manner by disclosing Valerie Wilson's CIA identity as part of a campaign against a critic. Once upon a time, the Bush White House said anyone involved in the leak would be booted out its door. Bush broke that promise. Rove escaped indictment. He ought not to escape judgment.

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COMMENT

No Clear Antiwar Signal

Anyone looking for a signal from the September 12 Senate and House primaries that Democrats will go into the November campaign as a clearly defined antiwar party didn't get it. There was no high-profile win for an antiwar challenger to a prowar incumbent, like that of Ned Lamont over Joe Lieberman in the August 8 Connecticut primary. In fact, New York Senator Hillary Clinton, who (although never as slavishly supportive of the war as Lieberman) remains essentially on board with the mission, won a convincing 4-to-1 victory over labor activist Jonathan Tasini's sincere but underfunded campaign. In Maryland, where former NAACP president Kweisi Mfume staked an uphill run for an open Senate seat at least in part on his blunter opposition to the war than frontrunner Ben Cardin, Cardin won.

Both Clinton and Cardin ran smarter than Lieberman, sharpening their criticism of the Administration's conduct of the war as primary day approached. Clinton finished the season denouncing Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, while Cardin, who had once resisted timelines, ended up talking about the wisdom of removing US ground forces from Iraq by the end of 2007.

So it will be that, in Senate races this fall, Democratic nominees will run the gamut from the Bring the Troops Home position articulated by Lamont to the murky criticisms of Cardin and Clinton to the "stay the course" line of Nebraska maverick Ben Nelson. For the most part, Democrats will be more antiwar than their Republican foes, with the possible exception of Rhode Island's Lincoln Chafee, a war critic who beat back a conservative GOP primary challenge with, ironically, the support of a White House that did not believe anyone to the right of Chafee could hold the seat. Chafee might still lose in a fall electoral season where polls suggest that voters, frustrated in general by Administration missteps and in particular by the refusal of the President to recognize degeneration of conditions in Iraq, are ready for change.

On the war, the change message will come through a lot louder and clearer in a number of House races, thanks in part to victories of candidates such as Marylander John Sarbanes, New Yorkers Yvette Clarke and John Hall, and Minnesotan Keith Ellison. Running in crowded primary fields, all four won by mounting antiwar campaigns that promised to jump-start the Democratic Party as an opposition force in Congress. Sarbanes, the son of retiring Senator Paul Sarbanes, sought an open seat, campaigning on the theme that Congressional Democrats must use all the political and procedural leverage they can muster to force the Administration to present an exit strategy. It was a message similar to that of veteran activist Donna Edwards, who at press time narrowly trailed centrist incumbent Al Wynn in another House district in Maryland—where a busy primary day also saw law professor and *Nation* contributor Jamie Raskin, with an unabashedly progressive campaign, upset an entrenched state senator.

In New York, Clarke broke out of a multicandidate contest for a Brooklyn seat once held by Representative Shirley Chisholm by making a high-profile pre-primary appearance with Representative Jack Murtha of Pennsylvania, one of the most identifiable Congressional critics of the war. In a GOP-held district north of New York City, Hall, a founding member of the rock band Orleans, parlayed endorsements from antiwar Representative Maurice Hinchey and antinuclear allies like Bonnie Raitt and Pete Seeger into a big win.

Ellison, whose campaign distributed Bring Our Troops Home Now literature throughout the Minneapolis-based district, is an African-American who converted to Islam. His campaign was compared by the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* to those of the late Senator Paul Wellstone, who died in a plane crash shortly after casting a critical 2002 vote against authorizing Bush to invade Iraq. Like Wellstone, Ellison targeted so-called unlikely voters—among them peace activists who have grown frustrated with both major parties and members of a burgeoning Somali community and other groups with concerns about foreign policy.

Sarbanes, Clarke and Ellison are all well positioned to win in November. Hall's got a tough race ahead of him, as do other primary winners who are war critics, like New Hampshire's Carol Shea-Porter and Arizona's Gabrielle Giffords. And it's important to remember that the war is not the only issue; in Arizona, for instance, Giffords will be running against a Republican who is so extreme on immigration issues that the White House tried to prevent his nomination.

As attention turns to November, Democrats are in the running to take back the House. But they have to recognize that George Bush and Karl Rove will do everything they can to scare Americans into voting their fears rather than their hopes, and to excite the hard-core base. Instead of taking comfort in positive polls, Democrats would be wise to sharpen their message on the war, and other issues, and to study Keith Ellison's smart strategies for expanding their base by getting war foes and foreign-policy critics to the polls.

JOHN NICHOLS

CA Leads on Climate

California, and Fran Pavley, have done it again. Twice now, this schoolteacher turned politician has written the most far-reaching global warming legislation enacted in the United States. Having spent the first twenty-five years of her career teaching California eighth graders American history—Benjamin Franklin, she says, is her favorite historical figure—Pavley was elected to the State Assembly in 2000. The Democrat promptly teamed up with environmental groups to write and win passage of a law requiring all motor vehicles sold in California to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions 30 percent by 2016. Now she's gone further. On August 31 the legislature passed, and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger promised to sign, her Global Warming Solutions Act. The law requires California, the world's sixth-biggest economy, to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, a cut of about 25 percent. This marks the first time that mandatory, comprehensive caps on greenhouse gas emissions have been imposed in the United States.

If Pavley's triumph illustrates how far California is ahead of America in fighting climate change, it also reveals how far America is behind the rest of the world. One would never guess

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COMMENT

this from the hosannas that environmentalists, politicians and editorial writers have showered on Pavley's bill. "Historic" and "revolutionary" were but two of the superlatives employed. All true, but only within the political context of the United States, where a consensus on global warming has emerged only in recent months, following Hurricane Katrina and the plain-spoken media coverage it (finally) provoked.

Look again at the numbers in the act. Talk about an inconvenient truth! Returning California's greenhouse emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 is even less ambitious than the Kyoto Protocol, which requires industrial nations to lower emissions approximately 5 percent below 1990 levels by 2012. And Kyoto's targets are only a tiny step toward the cuts that are truly necessary. Scientists of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change have been saying since 1990 that emissions cuts of 70 percent below 1990 levels will be needed to stabilize the climate.

This shortcoming went unmentioned in all the commentary on the new law, but Pavley herself freely admits it. "Is this bill enough to really address global warming? Absolutely not," she says. "But it's an important first step. The real idea behind the bill is to get other states to follow our lead. And we will build on this. You know, passing AB 1493 [Pavley's 2002 vehicle emissions law] wasn't the end of the story either."

Indeed, ten other states, including fellow powerhouse New York, have committed their governments to adopting the same 30 percent emissions cuts Pavley's earlier law mandates, assuming the law survives a pending court challenge. A coalition of automobile companies—including supposedly green Toyota and Honda—filed suit against the law in 2004; the Bush Administration soon joined the suit. But the Schwarzenegger administration has vigorously defended the law in court. And, says Terry Tamminen, the governor's top environmental aide, "the judge hasn't ordered any injunction or halt to the program, so meanwhile the car companies have to prepare to comply with the rules."

Likewise with Pavley's new law: Virtually simultaneously with California, seven Northeastern states announced in August that they'll impose mandatory reductions on greenhouse gas emissions from electric power production, a sector responsible for approximately one-third of total US emissions. Again, the relative size of the reductions is small: a 10 percent drop from 1990 levels by 2019. In Arizona, Governor Janet Napolitano issued an executive order urging the state to reduce total greenhouse emissions to 2000 levels by 2020. Such steps send an unmistakable message. Momentum is building nationwide to attack global warming. Mandatory emissions cuts—and a real or de facto price on carbon and other greenhouse gases—will be facts of economic life in twenty-first-century America.

This helps explain the growing enthusiasm among state and local governments for expanding green energy production. Twenty-two states and the District of Columbia now require electric utility companies to produce a specific amount of electricity from renewable sources like wind and solar. Jim Marston, director of state global warming initiatives for Environmental Defense, says, "California is clearly the national leader on green energy, but it's joined in that first tier by New York, New Jersey and maybe Illinois, followed by Washington, Connecticut, Maine and Massachusetts." But the most exciting developments, Marston adds, are unfolding "in states where you don't expect it, like New Mexico, Florida, North Carolina and Utah."

Fran Pavley has now been termed out of the California Assembly; the Global Warming Solutions Act will pass as she leaves office. She plans to run for State Senate in 2008, joking, "I guess I won't be getting too many oil company contributions." Whatever happens down the road, Pavley has jump-started California's, and thereby the nation's, response to the greatest threat of our time. Benjamin Franklin, one suspects, would be proud.

MARK HERTSGAARD

Mark Hertsgaard, The Nation*'s environment correspondent, is the author, most recently, of* Earth Odyssey: Around the World in Search of Our Environmental Future *and* The Eagle's Shadow: Why America Fascinates and Infuriates the World. *He is a fellow of The Nation Institute.*

CALVIN TRILLIN

George Bush Explains His Policy on Torture To Someone Who Is Being Waterboarded

An "alternate set of procedures"
Is what we're applying right now.
So please don't confuse this with torture,
That's something I'd never allow.

I know when you feel you are drowning,
You're thinking, "They're torturing me!"
But torture is not what we call it,
So torture it simply can't be.

You're lucky Americans got you,
If torture's the thing that you dread.
An alternate set of procedures
Is what we're applying instead.

The UN After Lebanon

As the sixty-first annual session of the United Nations General Assembly gets under way, and especially in light of the UN's complex relationship to the recent war in Lebanon, it's a good time to take stock of how the organization is doing. In a strange turn of events, it was Israel and the United States that turned to the UN to bail them out of their horrific failure in Lebanon. It was in the UN Security Council that the language and arrangements for a cease-fire were finally worked out. And it was

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COMMENT

the UN that was entrusted with composing and managing the peacekeeping force that is supposed to protect the Israeli border from Hezbollah violence. Also, it was Kofi Annan's diplomacy that finally induced Israel to lift its blockade of Lebanon. From these perspectives the UN seems like an indispensable part of the frayed fabric of world order in the early part of the twenty-first century.

But a deeper look is not so reassuring. Action in the UN Security Council was stalled for thirty-four days by geopolitics while the bombs were falling on Lebanese villages and cities. The United States was able to use its commanding influence at the UN to prevent even an urgent call for a cease-fire. And the Security Council failed in its core mission of protecting a country that is a victim of aggression—in this case, Lebanon. No matter how much international law is stretched to deal with the challenges to territorial security posed by violent nonstate actors, there was no legal or moral basis for Israel to launch a full-scale war that extended the field of combat to the whole of Lebanon. Hezbollah's July 12 cross-border raid and capture of two Israeli soldiers, used by Israel as a pretext for its response, justified proportionate retaliation but not war. Israel's response, which included demolishing villages and large residential sections of Beirut, amounts to a repudiation of the core restraint on the use of force in the UN Charter. For the United States to encourage this was a further blow to UN authority.

For the Security Council to be silent in the face of such a flagrant violation of the UN Charter is one more indication that law takes a back seat to power at the UN. And when the cease-fire resolution finally was agreed upon, it was one-sided in favor of Israel. Beyond this, denying Hezbollah any opportunity to participate in the UN discussion underscores the anachronistic insistence that only states can be full participants in international life. For one thing, Israel insists that its war was waged exclusively against Hezbollah, overlooking the devastation to Lebanon and its people; at the same time, only the government of Lebanon is allowed to represent the people of the country affected by the conflict at meetings of the Security Council.

In a sense, this tension between power and law was what was expected of the UN from the beginning. Otherwise, the veto makes no sense. Giving the five permanent members of the Security Council a veto grants these countries an exemption from accountability for their wrongs and those of their friends and allies, however grievous. This exemption was viewed back in 1945 as necessary; it was hoped that the destructiveness of war, dramatized by the advent of atomic bombs, would induce large countries to abandon war as a means of realizing their ambitions. At the time, American leaders, especially FDR, encouraged this optimism, believing in the possibility that the victors in World War II could cooperate to sustain peace as well as they had collaborated in war. The success of deterrence can be attributed largely to this partial learning experience—this realization that a third world war would end in mutual catastrophe.

But in the post-9/11 world a new kind of "unlearning" has been taking place. This shift preceded 9/11 and the Bush presidency but has been accentuated by the new realities. The 9/11 events posed challenges that US leaders believed could not be met either by a traditional war against a state or by robust law enforcement against perpetrators of terrorist crimes. The US government chose the war option and appeared to be following the basic Israeli approach taken for years against its nonstate enemies. This US/Israel response has been based on a reversal of the logic of proxy wars. Instead of using nonstate actors to pursue the goals of states, states are made to bear full responsibility for the wrongs done by nonstates that use the state as a base for operations or that might transfer deadly weapons to enemy nonstate actors. Applying this logic to Afghanistan, but especially to Iraq and Lebanon, makes it more and more clear that this approach fails to achieve its goals and relies on collective punishment, the result of which has been to magnify the problem rather than overcome it and to bring devastation to those societies.

Taking stock of the UN after the Lebanon war leads to two observations. First, it is important to lower our expectations about what the UN can do to uphold the promise of the charter to protect victims of war. But it is equally important to recognize the significant role the UN plays in moderating the edges of warfare and facilitating the transition from war to peace. Second, although it is unrealistic to expect the UN to live up to its charter, this effort to curtail war as an instrument of statecraft is vitally necessary. But real progress will depend on civil society activism.

The UN has adapted to many changes during the sixty-one years of its existence, including the struggle against colonialism, the rise of the South, the cold war and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It has held together to a remarkable degree, with virtually every country maintaining and valuing its membership. Outside the war/peace area its contributions to human well-being are impressive. The development of an architecture for the protection of human rights was only possible because of UN initiatives. The UN has led the way in promoting awareness of environmental concerns and global warming, giving issues of health and poverty global status, contributing to a stable public order for the oceans and providing a framework for transnational trade and investments. The UN disappoints its followers less because of its deficiencies and more because of the agendas of its most influential members. Until these states, above all the United States, begin to act like law-abiding members of the world community, the sort of mixed record the UN displayed during the Lebanon war is the best we can expect.

RICHARD FALK

Richard Falk, visiting scholar at UCLA Law School this year, is the author, among other books, of The Declining World Order.

ON THE WEB: Max Blumenthal explores the right-wing roots of ABC's flawed docudrama *The Path to 9/11*. Christian Parenti reports from Afghanistan on mounting pessimism about the country's future—a likely descent into chaos. Astronomer Marla Geha explains exactly why Pluto was downsized from a planet to a dwarf. Tom Engelhardt deconstructs George W. Bush's increasingly bellicose rhetoric (www.thenation.com).

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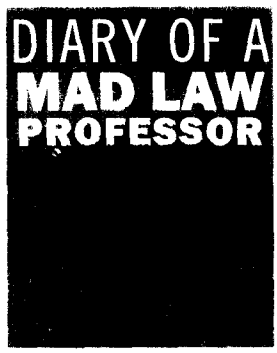
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

A Klatch of Civilizations



Some years ago, I was trying to count the number of African-American students in my son's class. "Let me see..." I said. "There's you and A and B and C..." *C's not black*, he said. I was surprised. I knew C, her parents and her grandparents; by most societal measures, they would be thought of as black. "Why do you say that?" *She hangs out with the white kids.* "And you don't? What about your three best friends, X, Y and Z?" *They're black.* "All three of them are quite blond! What makes them black?" *They hang out with me.* "So why aren't you white for hanging out with them, like C?" *Because white kids go to Starbucks and order light Frappuccinos.* "I go to Starbucks!" *And you're white. That's why I don't hang out with you.* "But you go to Starbucks!" *Only twice, and then I ordered a dark chocolate mocha latte.*

My son was joshing, but it made me think. I was organizing his classmates by some combination of phenotype, family history and culture. My interest in keeping such a tally was motivated by a wish that my son not be tokenized. Being "the only one" sparks my own anxieties about having grown up as the lone "colored" kid throughout elementary school. In high school there were a few more dark dots in the mix, which was better because those in the majority couldn't generalize about you quite so easily. And if they did generalize, at least you had someone to roll your eyes with at the absurdity of being lumped together. We fought for inclusiveness in a world that too often hoards life's rewards by racial assignation.

My son's tongue-in-cheek use of Starbucks-as-race is obviously a more malleable marker than skin color. It is a stereotype, but it was playful precisely because of its dependence on easy shape-shifting. Of course, even that kind of stereotyping is not without its risks: If his standard had been Nikes or talking like a rapper, it might have been a lot less funny—i.e., if his underlying references were really to fixed or negative assumptions about phenotype and class.

Anyway, I've been thinking about all this because of the new season of *Survivor*. In an ostensible effort to increase nonwhite viewership, CBS has divided contestants for the million-dollar prize into "tribes" of "blacks, whites, Asians and Latinos." Since it hasn't aired as of this writing, let me limit my concern to the blathering of Jeff Probst, *Survivor*'s host, who gushes about having "the most ethnically diverse cast in the history of TV." Probst's explanation for why one would then chop up the rainbow into color-coded combat units is—"ethnic pride." Not that he'd know: Probst identifies as "a white guy from Wichita" and "white people are mutts...we don't have any ethnicity we hold on to." (My condolences, ye tribes of wincing Wichitans.) Indeed, Probst was surprised to learn that "Asian" includes Japanese, Koreans and Chinese. "When you start talking to a person from Asia, you realize—Wow! They have all different backgrounds!"

If CBS has to pander this disgracefully for ratings, at least it ought to serve up the kind of stereotypes whose banishment to Rarotonga all Americans, regardless of race, religion or ethnicity, could come together and celebrate. For instance, I'd send a tribe of The Deservedly Lovelorn, led by rapper Flavor Flav (recruited away from his own reality show in which women compete for his affections). You may have seen him in *People* magazine dressed in pinstriped suit, spats, cane and top hat, large gold braces on his teeth, sitting upon a red velvet throne. He says he's looking for a woman who has brains, won't dominate him and if you made a batch of cookie dough and rolled her face in it, it would make some really nice face cookies. Since, if there is a God, his is a show doomed for rapid cancellation, Mr. Flav might soon be available for attempted *Survival* on an uninhabited island off the coast of New Zealand. And I have just the woman for him. She's a student I had long ago—a white woman from South Africa who'd recently become a US citizen. According to her, that made her an African-American. Not only did she call herself an African-American, she decided she wanted to join the African-American student association, where she held forth on topics having little to do with the advancement of civil rights or public accommodation. It was cynical, but hey. She made fine face cookies.

I'd also send a tribe of The Together Makes It Hot Bloods, composed of those who meet Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's definition of the same: "I mean Cuban, Puerto Rican, they are all very hot. They have the, you know, part of the black blood in them and part of the Latino blood in them that together makes it." Since the Governor's handlers were quick to spin "the blood" as the metaphor, the trope, the bad translation, we are obliged to include in this group Paris Hilton, hot *mestiza* vixen—if in the purely literary sense. I'd tribalize her with Senator George Allen, who welcomed a dark-skinned American in his audience to the "real world of Virginia" by calling him *macaca*. Now the Senator might appear to be a stolid GOP chip-off-the-old-football-hero-dad, but Allen's mother is... French. *L'étranger*, in case I have to spell it out. Allen speaks French fluently, and no one who speaks French has any doubt that *macaca*—literally, "monkey-boy"—is racist. But whether or not you believe Allen's story that he didn't know what it meant, let's all just stop and think about the bigger picture here: Senator George Allen has hot French blood! Alas, Governor Schwarzenegger himself is not among the hot-blooded, however many steroids his tongue is on. Besides, we'll need him over with the tribe of The Linguistically Challenged, including Americans Who Don't Speak English (George W. Bush as tribal elder), Latinos Who Don't Speak Hispanic and billions of sad Asians Who Don't Speak Chinese.

Where does that leave the rest of us? For lack of a better option, you'll find me on the curb outside an unplaceably generic Starbucks, hashing out the meaning of pumpkin spice latte with my commercially inflected, coolly cosmopolitan offspring. We'll be laughing, but warily, negotiating the freedoms and pitfalls of a world so contingently ordered, with the ease of a grande house blend. ■

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ERIC ALTERMAN

Lying About 9/11? Easy as ABC

You may have heard talk of the TV network that decided to devote hours and hours of its prime-time schedule to a deliberately false rendering of significant historical events in order to flatter the ignorance and ideology of its nation's rulers and mislead its citizens. Yes, it's true. Al Manar, the Hezbollah television network, did recently broadcast in Lebanon a prime-time series based on the notoriously dishonest *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

Here at home another network, ABC, and its parent, Disney, broadcast a prime-time, commercial-free miniseries, *The Path to 9/11*, also devoted to a deliberately dishonest rendering of history designed to flatter our current rulers.

How did Disney's decision differ from Hezbollah's? It's hard to say. The various statements coming from Disney and ABC executives have been so contradictory—both internally and when compared with known facts—it's nearly impossible to figure out what they intended to accomplish. After all, it's not every day that a global media corporation spends tens of millions to make a film to give away without commercials and offer free on iTunes, and bases it all on lies. It is particularly odd when it turns out to be the very same corporation that decided to forgo hundreds of millions of dollars when it refused to distribute another movie, *Fahrenheit 9-11*, that took a differing view of this same historical event because, as one of its executives explained, "it's not in the interest of any major corporation to be dragged into a highly charged partisan political battle."

The network initially trumpeted the program in full-page ads as "based on the 9/11 Commission Report." But it explicitly contradicts the findings of almost every part of that report, in order to cast blame on the Clinton Administration—inventing scenes, characters and dialogue along the way. To take just one of many examples, as *Editor & Publisher* reported, the film "explores the terrorist threat starting with the 1993 bombing at the World Trade Center, and there is little question that President Clinton is dealt with severely, almost mockingly, with the Lewinsky scandal closely tied to his failure to cripple al-Qaeda." The commission concluded exactly the opposite. Clinton instructed his staff to ignore his domestic troubles and, as the report explains, "All his aides testified to us that they based their advice solely on national security considerations. We have found no reason to question their statements."

Former National Security Council senior director for counterterrorism Roger Cressey has added in a *Washington Times* op-ed that Clinton "approved every request made of him by the CIA and the U.S. military involving using force against bin Laden and al Qaeda." Recall that most Republicans and many in the media were themselves obsessed with the President's penis at the time and accused Clinton of playing "wag the dog" with every attempt to take action against Al Qaeda.

In what might otherwise be considered a comedy of errors, *New York Times* television critic Alessandra Stanley—who has earned what must be the largest collection of corrections on staff despite having the job only of watching television—repeated this lie, about Clinton's supposed focus on Lewinsky at the expense of the hunt for bin Laden, in the Paper of Record. Stanley's faulty rendering of history, although corrected in the *Times*, demonstrates the danger presented by ABC's irresponsibility. If a *Times* reporter and her editors can't tell the facts from the fiction, how in the world can Mr. and Mrs. American—or Mr. and Mrs. Foreigner—be expected to?

ABC News, which might have taken a stand on behalf of what its own staffers know to be the truth, took a collective pass on the problem. Its amazingly comprehensive daily digest The Note all but ignored it. *This Week* host George Stephanopoulos made no effort to defend either historical truth or his former colleagues in the Clinton Administration. ABC News correspondent and blogger Jake Tapper went so far as to imply that those who cared enough to protest ABC's lies were giving aid and comfort to the enemy. "I wonder," he wrote, sounding much like Donald Rumsfeld or Dick Cheney, "what would bin Laden prefer us to focus on? A TV show, or improving this country's defenses?" (As Media Matters's Jamison Foser pointed out about Tapper's challenge: "This from a guy who, just two days earlier, had devoted a post to *Dancing With the Stars* appearances by country music singer Sara Evans and [Tucker] Carlson, whom Tapper described as 'my personal favorite contestant' and 'my pal.'")

Just why was the network willing to humiliate its news division, costing its stockholders tens of millions in order to slander public servants with a story it knows to be a tissue of lies? Why did it ignore the protestations of its own consultants, including FBI agent Thomas Nicoletti, who quit after less than a month, calling parts of the program "total fiction"? And why did it ignore protests from many members of the 9/11 Commission? President Clinton's lawyers and Cabinet members? A group of distinguished historians (in whose company I was honored to be included)? All Americans who hold the history of that horrible day as something to be honored, not trampled upon?

ABC execs offered up one Mickey Mouse excuse after another. One day they defended their depiction as true; the next they claimed it was a "dramatization, not a documentary." But as Max Blumenthal reports on the Huffington Post and TheNation.com, the program is part of a plan hatched by a group of right-wing extremists dedicated, in the words of the organization founded by the film's director, David Cunningham, "to a Godly transformation and revolution TO and THROUGH the Film and Television industry." The scriptwriter, a young friend of Rush Limbaugh's named Cyrus Nowrasteh, was a featured speaker at the Liberty Film Festival, an annual event founded to promote right-wing films, which calls itself "A Program of the David Horowitz Freedom Center." ABC also passed along hundreds of advance screeners to right-wing taste-makers like Limbaugh but refused to allow even the ex-President to have an early look.

Repeat after me: "What liberal media?" ■

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ARTICLES

WHAT CAN SHERROD BROWN DO FOR THE DEMOCRATS?

by JOHN NICHOLS

The road to the Democratic Party's renewal runs through Allen County, Ohio. And Sherrod Brown is on it, looking for the towns his party forgot and the voters who got away. "We have a government in Washington that has betrayed the middle class and the working poor in this country," the Democratic Senate candidate tells a crowd gathered in the back of a Carpenters Union hall in Lima, the manufacturing town that is the turbine in the county's sputtering economic engine. "You know what I mean when I say 'betrayed.' There's no other word for it. And I'm not one of those Democrats who is going to hesitate to talk about that betrayal. The stakes are too high for places like this." "Amen!" comes a call from the crowd. "Sherrod's talking the language people here talk," says Derry Glenn, a Lima city councilman, who stands in an open doorway at the back of the hall. "You start by establishing that you understand what's wrong. Kerry never did that."

Theoretically, Lima should be Democratic turf. A blue-collar town with a solid union base and a substantial African-American population, this city of 40,000 has lost 8,000 manufacturing jobs and a quarter of its population over the past two decades. A few years back, a PBS documentary crew titled a report from Lima *Lost in Middle America*. Though Lima still has a Ford plant and an Army tank facility, the deindustrialization that has hammered Ohio during George W. Bush's tenure has taken a particular toll here. The local unemployment rate sits at 6.9 percent, a full point above the Ohio rate, which is a full point above the national rate. Yet in 2004, Democrat John Kerry only managed a tie with Bush in the city, while the Republican swept Allen County by a 2-to-1 margin. The inability of the Democrats to capitalize on economic issues to put towns like Lima in their column has contributed mightily to Republican domination of Ohio, where all major statewide offices are in GOP hands and where the last two presidential elections handed Bush the electoral votes he needed to secure the presidency. No matter what one thinks about the electoral shenanigans Republicans pulled before and during the 2004 presidential vote, a Democrat has to hold his own in places like Lima and Allen County if he wants to win by a big enough margin to put talk of recounts behind him. "We are going to do a lot better than Kerry in these towns," Brown says, as he whirls through another sixteen-hour day at senior centers, union halls and Farm Bureau meetings in communities that don't see many big-name Democrats.

Brown, a seven-term Congressman who gave up the chance to be a key player in what may be a Democrat-controlled House after November to challenge Republican Senator Mike DeWine, knows he must change his party's fortunes in Lima and a dozen other mid-size factory towns if his gamble is to succeed. And he recognizes that he will not crack the political codes of blue-collar counties that voted for Bush by repeating talking points produced by Democratic strategists in Washington. He's got to go deeper to make a connection that renews old loyalties and protects him against Republican attack strategies that have allowed the party to dominate Senate contests in Ohio and nationally.

What Brown offers Lima is an economic message that owes more to William Jennings Bryan than Bill Clinton, who always ran weaker in Ohio than he did nationally. Brown is not just another critic of the free-trade policies of the past several administrations. He wrote the book on the subject, *The Myths of Free Trade: Why American Trade Policy Has Failed*, which earned him praise from author Tom Frank for being the rare Democrat who actually understands what's the matter with Kansas—and, perhaps, Ohio. He preaches a fair-trade gospel that begins with a promise to rewrite the North American Free Trade Agreement and other trade deals to protect workers, the environment and communities—as opposed to encouraging multinational corporations to entertain relocation outside the country. But Brown's no "back to the future" populist; he recognizes that altering trade policies won't bring all the lost jobs back. He wants Democrats to adopt industrial policies that champion the development of new industries in old manufacturing towns. Brown's "we need to make

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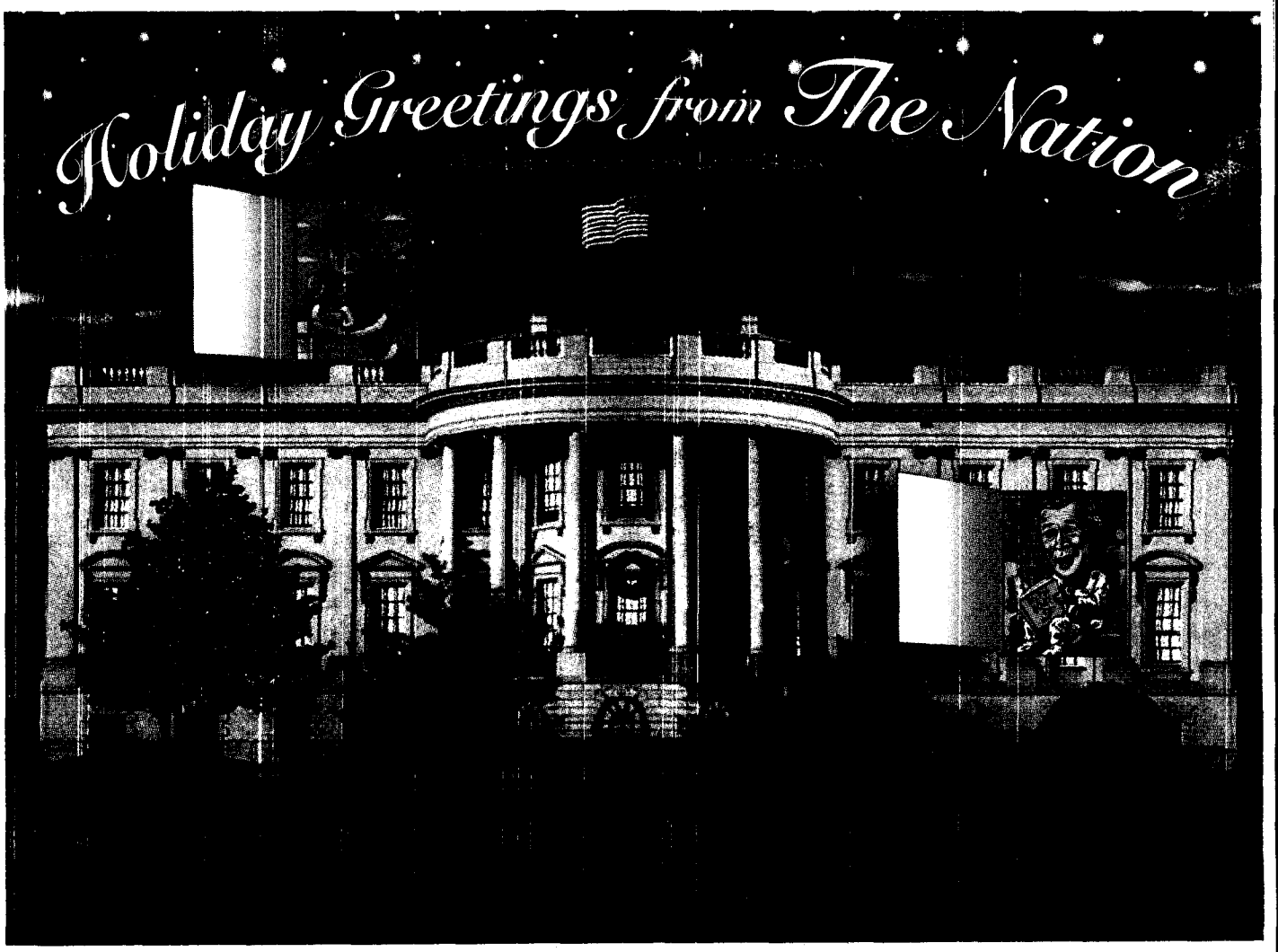

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Ohio the Silicon Valley of alternative energy" pitch has resonated with CEOs who don't typically talk up Democrats. "Sherrod understands that Ohio can remain a manufacturing state if we've got a federal government that supports the development of new industries," says Thomas Willis, president of Precision Energy & Technology, a fuel-cell firm, who appears with the candidate to vouch for Brown as the real friend of small manufacturers in a race with DeWine. Brown builds his message out with a promise to restructure tax policy to favor working families rather than billionaires and runaway corporations—he's for childcare, home-buying, college-tuition and elder-care tax credits; he's against tax cuts for the rich—and with talk about redirecting money spent on the Iraq War to meet domestic needs.

The plan plays well on the stump. In what is certain to remain a tight race—and such a critical race for Democrats that the party had Brown deliver its first national radio address of the fall campaign—the challenger now leads DeWine in most polls. With an aggressive message, and a determination to take that message not just to places Kerry won in 2004 but to the places where he lost, Brown is running a different race from the one Democrats usually wage in battleground states. That's what makes this contest such a big deal for progressives far beyond Ohio. They have long argued that the Democratic Party will only overcome Republican national-security and God-guns-and-gays sloganeering by talking tough about economics and linking their domestic agenda to blunt opposition to a costly occupation of Iraq. If Brown, an anti-war economic populist who supports abortion rights and gay rights, can defeat a Republican incumbent with a special-interest-laden bankroll and Karl Rove–inspired attack ads, then the lesson for Democrats is a dramatic one. Instead of pulling punches, they can throw them. "What Sherrod's doing is what every Democrat should be doing," says Roger Tauss, legislative director of the Transport Workers Union. "The Democrats have had trouble figuring out how to talk about economics. They don't know how to reach people who are hurting but still vote Republican. Sherrod refuses to believe those voters can't be won over."

In particular, Brown does not give up on blue-collar voters in forgotten cities like his hometown of Mansfield. With his Kennedyesque looks and Clintonesque memory for facts and figures—not just on hot-button issues but on projects like his successful fight to dramatically increase US support for international programs to combat tuberculosis—he moves easily through the political and social scenes of New York and Los Angeles, where he must raise money for a campaign that could cost $20 million. But he is, first and foremost, an Ohio boy. The son of a small-town doctor who grew up working summers on a family farm, he has spent his adult life representing automaking towns like Mansfield. Elected to the state legislature at 22 and as Secretary of State at 29, Brown in the early 1980s seemed destined to replace one of Ohio's Democratic senators, Howard Metzenbaum or John Glenn. Instead, his political career was derailed in 1990, when he lost the state post to Republican Bob Taft—now Ohio's scandal-plagued lame-duck governor—in a brutal election that saw state and national GOP operatives pour millions into an attack campaign intended to stop Brown in his tracks.

But Brown proved resilient. When a northern Ohio Congressional seat opened in 1992, he beat a well-funded Republican foe by running far ahead of the national Democratic ticket and arrived in Congress in time to vote against NAFTA. Representing a blue-collar district that was home to thousands of auto- and steelworkers, the Yale-educated Brown became their champion—not just in the House but in the streets of Seattle, where he marched in 1999 with Ohio unionists protesting the World Trade Organization. With Brown, workers come first, says John Ryan, longtime head of Cleveland's North Shore Federation of Labor, who recalls the Democrat's willingness "to take on the President of his own party by denying President Clinton fast-track authority" to negotiate trade agreements. Brown's tactical skills and his knowledge of the issues, which were recognized by House minority leaders Dick Gephardt and Nancy Pelosi when they made him point man in trade-policy fights with Democratic and Republican administrations, guaranteed that he would emerge in the Senate as one of his party's most effective spokesmen on economic issues.

But before anyone makes committee assignments, Brown must dislodge DeWine, a social conservative who backs the Bush Administration on most issues but has worked hard to fashion a moderate image. In a state where indictments of party operatives for influence-peddling have hurt Republicans this year, Brown's standard rap identifies the incumbent as the embodiment of a "Republican revolution" that has turned policy-making over to special-interest groups. Asked at an AARP candidate forum about prescription-drug prices, Brown recalls that he took a busload of seniors to Canada to buy drugs while DeWine took close to half a million dollars in contributions from the pharmaceutical industry.

Above all, Brown tags DeWine, and a lot of other politicians, as free-trade enthusiasts of the "new economy" that has left Ohio factory towns in the dust. When Derry Glenn, the Lima councilman, says "unemployment is just too high in this part of Ohio" and asks Brown what he'll do about it, the candidate responds: "I hear people on the East Coast and the West Coast say, 'We're moving beyond manufacturing. We're in a post-industrial era.' Well, that doesn't work for Lima." When Antelle Haithcock asks, "How much can an individual member of Congress do to keep a company here?" Brown shoots back: "Stop passing these trade agreements like NAFTA and CAFTA, which are as bad for workers in Guatemala as they are for workers in Ohio. Take some of the $2 billion a week we're spending on this war in Iraq and put it into developing alternative-fuel industries, so we can stop buying oil from countries that fund terrorists."

Brown does not fear addressing the war and, though he's taken hits for his outspoken opposition to the invasion and occupation, his stand does not seem to be hurting him. But Brown's prochoice position and his consistent support for gay rights could take their toll in a state where Republicans have success-

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fully exploited social issues. In 2004 an anti-same-sex-marriage referendum was used not just to draw religious conservatives to the polls but also to define Kerry as too liberal for the heartland. Outside the Carpenters hall in Lima, Glenn says, "When they brought in that same-sex-marriage stuff, a lot of Democrats moved over. Kerry lost 'em." This year, Republicans have peddled unsubstantiated suggestions that the popular Democratic nominee for governor, ordained minister and US Representative Ted Strickland might be a closeted gay man and came within a hair of insinuating that Brown should be identified as "D-Sodom & Gomorrah." National right-wing talk-radio personality Sean Hannity has attacked Brown as "a super liberal," while Rush Limbaugh looked at the Democrat's name and voting record and mistakenly identified him as a black member of Congress—in a clumsy attempt to stir racial divisions among Democrats. DeWine television ads—prepared by a firm that produced anti-Kerry "Swift Boat Veterans for Truth" commercials—attack Brown for opposing the Patriot Act.

For his part, Brown is sticking to economic issues, something he has done with remarkable success in a socially conservative Congressional district where even blue-collar voters who do not always agree with him recognize, as a gun-owning union member at the Ford plant in Lorain once explained, that "Sherrod Brown fights for us on the issues that matter." For Brown, the challenge this year is to get blue-collar workers, farmers and small-business owners in a sprawling state to share that sentiment. DeWine's negative ads will make the task harder, even as Brown fights back with a campaign that he promises will never just take the hits in the way that Kerry's did.

As Brown sees it, the real way to counter the attacks is by spending inordinate amounts of time traveling to the far corners of the state to engage in the sort of retail politics that can draw straying voters back to the Democratic line. In Dayton the candidate keeps aides waiting as he listens to Gina Keucher, a 41-year-old mother of four, describe how rising gas prices have forced her husband—the owner of a small bakery—to make his own deliveries. "He bakes all night and then heads off to do the deliveries. It's killing us, but we can't afford to hire a driver and pay for the gas," she says. Brown launches into something close to a tirade about the $7,000-an-hour the CEO of ExxonMobil makes, the influence of Big Oil's campaign money and the failure of Congress to challenge profiteering at the pump. Keucher is impressed, not just by the message but by the time the candidate has taken with her. As Brown leaves, she says, "I've voted for some Republicans, but this guy is great. Just think if we had a few like him in the Senate."

This year is supposed to be one of renewal for Senate Democrats. The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee's fundraising is strong. Candidate recruitment has gone well. While polls suggest Democrats are on track to hold their seats, Democratic challengers lead Republican incumbents in Montana and Pennsylvania as well as Ohio. In Missouri, Tennessee and Rhode Island, Democrats are running about even in races for GOP seats. And if the political winds blow right this fall, Democrats could find themselves within striking distance of Republican incumbents in Virginia, Nevada and Arizona. A Democratic takeover of the Senate is still a long shot, but the fact that there is even discussion of the prospect that the party could find the six seats it needs to achieve that goal has a lot to do with the unexpectedly strong campaign Brown is waging in a state that has for more than a decade been a killing ground for Democratic hopes.

For all the talk of red and blue, the battleground states where control of the Senate will be determined this year, and where the 2008 presidential contest is likely to be decided, are really purplish amalgams of cities of varying sizes and characters, suburbs and rural regions that Karl Rove understands in all of their complexity. In stark contrast, Democratic candidates and strategists have tried too frequently to win "easy"—by concentrating on generating increased turnout in "metro" strongholds, by going after suburban soccer moms and, too often, by fuzzing the message on economic issues. That approach hasn't worked. Senate contests are by their nature distinct from one another, but the overall pattern in 2002 and 2004 saw the Democratic Party fail to challenge vulnerable Republican incumbents and lose historically Democratic seats at a rate that handed the GOP a 55-to-45 majority in the chamber that has the most power to slow the President's agenda.

There is nothing easy about the approach Brown has taken. He accepts that Democrats must energize their base, but he refuses to accept that the base is geographically constrained. If Democrats want to win statewide races, Brown says, they must reconnect with voters who live in places that have been off the party's map for the past few election cycles. And they must recognize that after years of neglect of fundamental economic issues by Democrats who should have known better, a new generation of Democrats has to invest the most precious of all election-year commodities—time—in conversations that are really about rebuilding trust.

So it is that, on a rainy afternoon, as the candidate is being rushed out of the last meeting in Lima, Brown spies an elderly woman in the passenger seat of a parked car. "He always stops," whispers an aide, half admiring, half exasperated. And so Brown does, to listen as she speaks for five minutes about how heartbroken she is that her grandchildren can't find jobs in the city. Brown assures her that he won't let Lima down.

Standing a few feet away is Frank Lamar, an elected trustee from a Republican-leaning township neighboring Lima. "My constituents tell me the reason they stopped voting for Democrats was because no Democrats that matter come around our part of the state anymore," says Lamar. "But just look at Sherrod Brown, talking to that old woman. People see that, even some of the Republicans. And they start to think: Here's a Democrat who actually thinks we matter. Now, isn't that something? Might just have to vote for him." ■

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VIEWED FROM BUKAVU, ELECTIONS SEEM ONLY A SMALL PART OF MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK.

Congo Journey

JOHN LE CARRÉ

It was the strangest journey of my life and it always will be. I was looking for fictional characters I had invented, in a country I had never visited. The distant town of my imagination was Bukavu in Eastern Congo, known formerly as Costermansville and built in the early twentieth century by Belgian colonialists. It stands at the southern end of Lake Kivu, at 4,800 feet the highest and coolest of all Africa's Great Lakes. I had written my novel in a period when for personal reasons I had felt unable to leave England. Now, too late if my previous books were anything to go by, I was about to check its people and places against the reality.

TIM ROBINSON

But the novel isn't really set in Congo at all—or so I had almost persuaded myself by the time I began my journey. It's a romantic satire, for heaven's sake, written with both feet firmly off the ground. It's about Tony Blair's England, and good old-fashioned colonial exploitation, and political hypocrisy and shameless public lies, and other scores I had to settle. It's about the quest for identity in our multiethnic society, and New Labour's assault on our civil liberties, and a bunch of other similarly lofty themes. Congo is just backcloth, an abstraction, a symbol of perpetual colonial exploitation, slaughter, famine and disorder. To meet it face to face would only violate the delicate illusion!—or so I had tried to believe.

The only problem was that, well before I had added the last full stop to the first draft, Congo had become the elephant in my drawing room, and no amount of literary sophistry was going to make it disappear. My central character was the son of an erring Irish missionary and a Congolese headman's daughter. He had been dragged up in a bleak English boarding school, and he and I could get along fine. I had no quarrel with him. But when it came to my three Congolese warlords, each one some sort of standard-bearer of the militia or social faction that had spawned him, I had doubts. Neither my researches, nor my furtive lunches with Congolese expatriates, had reassured me that these characters could survive in the real world. If my visit to Bukavu did not deliver their likely counterparts—by which I mean, verify their attitudes and beliefs—I might be forced to look for other ways to tell the story, such as writing it again from scratch.

John le Carré is the author of numerous classic, bestselling novels, including Absolute Friends, The Spy Who Came In From the Cold, The Little Drummer Girl *and* Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy. *Several of his novels have been made into major motion pictures, including* The Constant Gardener *and* The Russia House. *His latest novel,* The Mission Song, *was published in the United States by Little, Brown in September.* *Copyright 2006 David Cornwall.*

In Belgian colonial memory, as in my novelist's fantasy, Bukavu was a lost paradise, a misted Shangri-La of wide, bougainvillea-laden streets and lakeside villas with lush gardens sloping to the shore. The province of South Kivu was to Central Africa what biblical Palestine was to Arabia. The volcanic soil of the surrounding hillsides was so fertile, the climate so benign, that there was scarcely a fruit, flower or vegetable that didn't thrive there. But Eastern Congo has like every paradise a fatal flaw: It is a natural treasure chest of gold, diamonds, cassiterite and now coltan and uranium, which for centuries has lured every known species of human predator to its misted hills and jungles, from freebooting Rwandan militias to suited corporate carpetbaggers with nice manners and fat checkbooks and shiny offices in London, Houston, St. Petersburg and Beijing.

Ever since the late 1960s, Bukavu has suffered catastrophe after disaster. In the wake of the Rwandan genocide that hand-killed almost a million people in a hundred days, the town found itself in the front line of the refugee crisis. Hutu insurgents who had fled across the border from Rwanda used Bukavu as one of their two main bases from which to attack the Tutsi-dominated revolutionary government that had ousted them and seized power in Kigali. Goma, at the northern tip of the lake, was the second. The Tutsis retaliated in what became known as the First Congo War, and Bukavu took the brunt. The town barely had time to draw breath before the Second Congo War struck. And in June 2004, Bukavu fell into the hands of one General Nkunda, who invited his men to do with it what they pleased for three days. The town was sacked, and scores of women were raped.

I had also read that the Roman Catholic cathedral that dominates the town is called Our Lady of Peace.

There were three of us in the car by the time our Rwandan driver took the winding hill road from Kigali and headed toward the Congolese border four hours' drive away. The Foreign Office had advised us not to go, but for my two traveling companions such warnings had about as much impact as a footnote in a backpackers' guide. Michela Wrong had spent twelve years reporting on the African continent. She had covered post-genocide Rwanda for Reuters and the BBC and had written a seminal book, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*, about Congo's recent history. Jason Stearns, at 29 a senior analyst with the International Crisis Group, had served three years in Bukavu as a political adviser to the United Nations. He spoke immaculate French, Swahili and an unknown number of the more obscure African languages and was widely held to be one of the West's leading authorities on Congo.

Both had plowed through an early draft of my novel, for-

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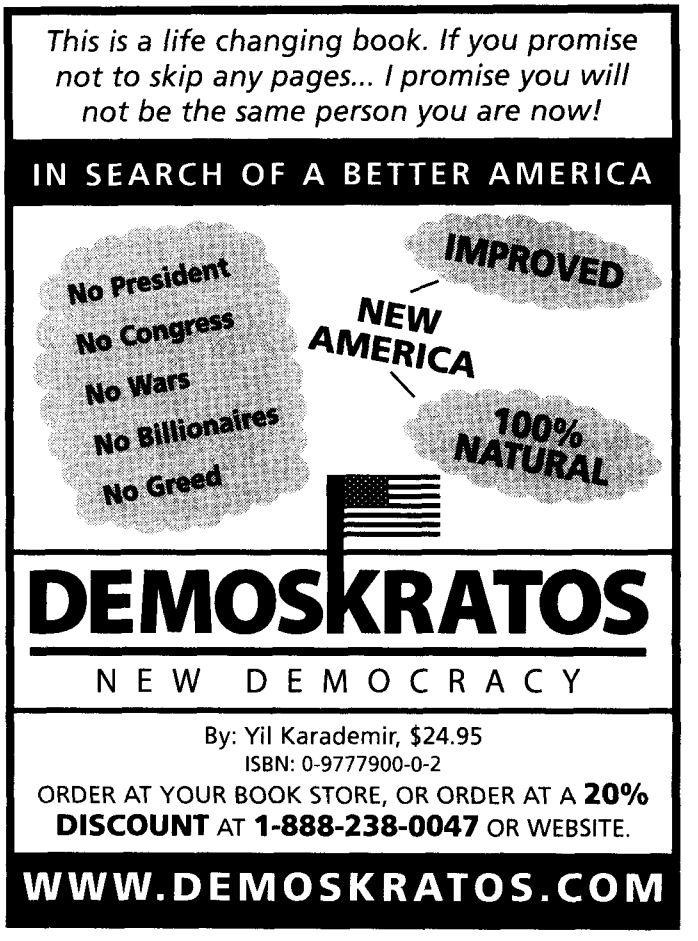
given my trespasses and offered advice. Both knew the kind of players I needed to meet, and the locations I needed to see. Both had their professional agendas but agreed to coincide their trips with mine. It was April. On July 30—but the date remained uncertain—the Democratic Republic of Congo was proposing to hold its first multiparty election in forty years at a cost of nearly $500 million, $400 million of them from the West. There was gathering nervousness about the outcome. For my companions this made it the perfect time to go, as it did for me, since my novel was set in the run-up to the same elections. My only problem was: Had I left it too late for my warlords?

Well before we reached the Congolese border, my imagined world had been changing before my eyes. The Hotel Mille Collines in Kigali, alias the Hotel Rwanda, where we had stayed the night, had an air of oppressive normality. I looked in vain for a commemorative photograph of the actor Don Cheadle, or his alter ego Paul Rusesabagina, the hotel manager who in 1994 had turned the Mille Collines into a secret refuge for Tutsis in terror of the panga and the gun. But that story, in the mind of the revolutionary party still in power, is no longer operative. The genocide, according to the prevailing political correctness, produced bigger and better heroes who were not darlings of the Western media. Ten minutes into Rwanda with your eyes open, you know that the Tutsi-led government runs a very tight ship indeed.

From the windows of our car as we wove toward Bukavu, we glimpsed Rwandan justice at work. In tailored meadows that would not have been out of place in a Swiss valley, villagers crouched in rings like summer schoolchildren. At their center, in place of teachers, men in prison pink gesticulated or hung their heads. To break the backlog of suspected *génocidaires* awaiting trial, Kigali has reinstated traditional village courts. Anyone may accuse, anyone may defend. Only judges are appointed by the government.

An hour short of the Congolese border we turned off the road and climbed a hill in order to take a look at a few of the *génocidaires'* victims. A former secondary school looked down on lovingly tended valleys. The curator, himself an improbable survivor, led us from one classroom to another. The dead—hundreds, of them, whole families, tricked into assembling for their own protection—had been laid out in fours and sixes on wooden pallets and coated with what looked like congealed flour and water. A lady with a face mask and bucket was giving them an extra coat. Many of the dead were children. In a country where farmers do their own slaughtering, the technique had come naturally: First cut the tendons, then take your time. Hands, arms and feet were stored separately in baskets. Torn clothing, brown with blood and mostly children's sizes, hung from the eaves of a cavernous assembly hall.

How had so many normally peaceable people been dragooned into becoming assassins at the drop of a hat? Answer: by a few bad men seizing the moment. By faking the evidence. By exploiting traditional resentments. By lies repeated over the radio. By persuading the Hutus that they themselves were about to be slaughtered by their Tutsi neighbors. Hermann Göring at his Nuremberg trial had the recipe off pat: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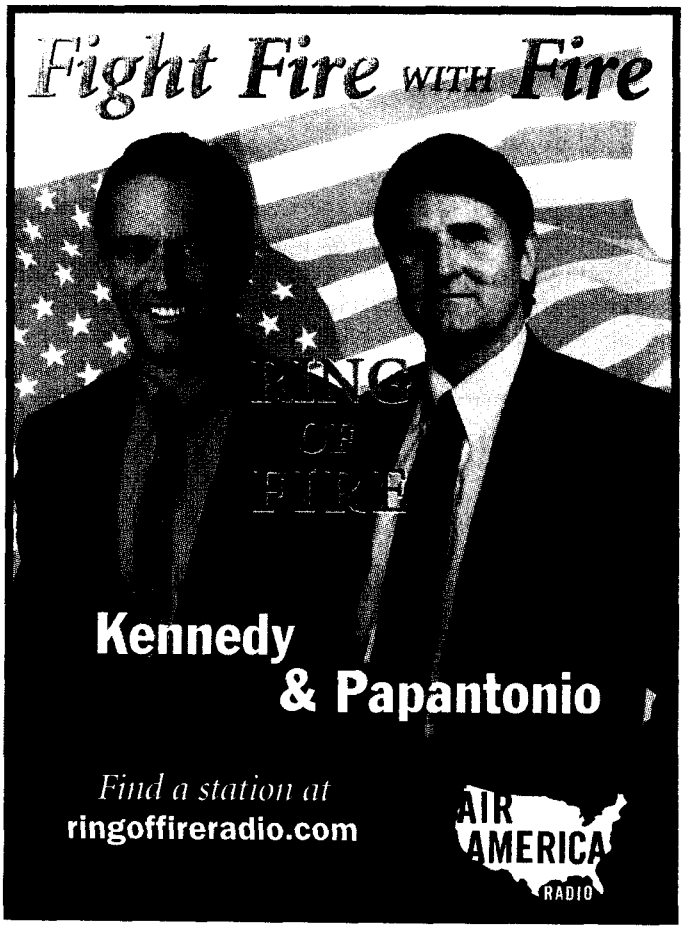

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"Naturally, the common people don't want war...but after all it's the leaders of the country who determine the policy, and it's always a simple matter to drag the people along.... All you have to do is tell them they're being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism.... It works the same in every country." And we know it still does.

Would I, as a Westerner, have felt easier if the murderers had used Zyklon B to do their work? Or dropped 15,000-pound "Daisy Cutter" bombs from two miles up?

"So when will you bury them?" we asked.

"When they have done their work," was the reply.

'The losers will say the vote was rigged, and they'll be right. The winner will take all, because why else win?' —*A warlord on the elections*

These dead have no one to name them, no one to mourn or bury them. The mourners too are dead. So the bodies will be left on show for a while, to silence the doubters and deniers.

Rwandan troops in green, US-style uniforms have appeared along the roadside. The Congolese frontier post is a dilapidated shed on the other side of an iron bridge across an outlet of the Ruzizi River. A cluster of female officials frown over our passports and vaccination certificates, shake their heads and confer. The more chaotic a country, the more intractable its bureaucracy. But we have Jason. An interior door bangs open, joyous cries are exchanged, Jason disappears. To peals of congratulatory laughter, our documents are returned to us. We bid farewell to the perfect tarmac of Rwanda and for five minutes lurch over giant potholes of red Kivu mud to our hotel.

In every trouble spot I have cautiously visited, there has always been one watering hole where, as if by secret rite, hacks, spies, aid workers and carpetbaggers converge. In Saigon, it was the Continental; in Phnom Penh, the Pnom; in Vientiane, the Constellation; in Beirut, the Commodore; and here in Bukavu it's the Orchid, a gated, low-built lakeside colonial villa surrounded by discreet cabins. The owner is a worldly wise *colon* who would have bled to death in one of Kivu's wars had not his late brother smuggled him to safety. In a corner of the dining room sits a German lady of a certain age who talks wistfully to strangers of the days when Bukavu was all white, and she could drive her Alfa Romeo at sixty miles an hour down the boulevard.

Next morning we retrace her route, but not at her speed. The boulevard is still wide and straight but, like every street in Bukavu, pitted by red rainwater gushing off the surrounding mountains. The houses are fallen gems of Art Nouveau metroland, with rounded corners, long windows and porches like cinema organs. Where there are new buildings, the same style is replicated today. The town itself is built on five peninsulas, "a green hand dipped in the lake," as it is locally described. The largest and once the most fashionable is La Botte, where Mobutu kept one of his many residences. According to the soldiers who barred our entry, the same villa was being refurbished for the new president, Joseph Kabila, Kivu-born son of the Maoist revolutionary and wheeler-dealer who in 1997 drove Mobutu from power and four years later was murdered by his own bodyguard. A steamy haze hangs over the lake for most of the day. The border with Rwanda splits it longways. The toe of La Botte tips provocatively eastward. The fish are very small. The lake's monster is called *mamba mutu*, half-woman and half-crocodile. What she likes best is eating human brains.

We enter a Roman Catholic seminary. Its windowless brick walls are unlike anything around them in the street. Behind them lies a world of tranquil gardens, television dishes, guest rooms, conference rooms, computers, libraries and mute servants. In the canteen an old white priest in jeans shuffles to the coffee urn, gives us a long, unearthly stare and goes his way. He suffered greatly but survived, our host explains, and laments how his fellow African priests are at risk from penitents who confess their ethnic hatreds too eloquently. Once inflamed, they are capable of becoming the worst extremists of them all. Thus in Rwanda, priests were known to summon all the Tutsis in their parish to the church, which was then torched or bulldozed with the priests' connivance.

My first warlord, Thomas, is about as far removed from my expectation as he could decently be. He is tall and elegantly dressed, and receives us with diplomatic grace. His house, guarded by sentries with semiautomatic rifles, is spacious and representational. A plasma television screen plays silent football while we talk. He speaks for the Banyamulenge, and his people have been fighting wars in Congo pretty well nonstop since 1966, but his own war was spent in South Africa, lobbying for their cause. The Banyamulenge, I had read, are pastoralists originally from Rwanda who over the last couple of hundred years have settled the high plateaus of the Mulenge mountains of South Kivu. Feared for their battle skills and reclusiveness, and hated for their supposed affinity with Rwanda, they are the first to be pilloried in times of discontent. Would the upcoming elections make things any better for them? we asked. His reply was not encouraging. The losers will say the vote was rigged, and they'll be right. The winner will take all, because why else win? Candidates are vying to demonstrate their pro-Congolese, anti-Rwandan credentials, so it will be open season on the Banyamulenge.

Thomas was similarly unimpressed by Kinshasa's efforts to incorporate Congo's many armed groups into one national army: "We have many men who have joined and then defected to the mountains. In the army they kill us and insult us, although we have fought many battles for them."

There was a chink of hope, he conceded. The Mai Mai, who regard themselves as the keepers of a Congo free of all "invaders" and "foreigners"—including the Banyamulenge—are also learning the high price that must be paid to become a soldier of Kinshasa. "Maybe as the Mai Mai learn to mistrust Kinshasa, they will draw closer to us."

Afterward, I ask Jason whether Thomas was right to be gloomy about the forthcoming elections. By and large, thought Jason, he was. Elections were only one trapping of a democratic system. Without a Parliament, courts or an administra-

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tion, they merely decided who got to rip off the country next. Thirty percent of Congolese lived on one meal a day. Eighty percent earned less than a dollar a day. The losers had guns, and would very probably use them to contest the outcome. And yes, another Congolese war could follow. Next day we met a colonel of Mai Mai, the largest and most notorious of Congo's many armed militias.

Like Thomas, the colonel is immaculately turned out. His Kinshasa-issue khaki drills are ironed and pressed, his badges of rank glisten in the midday sun.

We are sitting in an open-air cafe. From a sandbagged emplacement across the road, blue-helmeted Pakistani UN troops watch us over their gun barrels. The colonel fidgets a lot, perhaps in embarrassment. Two cellphones lie before him. His heavy French is rich in extraneous additives. Sometimes his language and beliefs seem a bit of a puzzle to him, as if he wants a different role in life but has been landed with this one. Like their forebears the Simba, the Mai Mai possess magical powers—*dawa*—which enable them to turn flying bullets into water.

"The Mai Mai are a force created by our ancestors. There are races in my country that do not deserve to be here. We fight them because we fear they will claim our sacred Congolese land. No government in Kinshasa can be trusted to do this; therefore, we do it ourselves. When Mobutu's power failed, we stood in the breach with our pangas, bows and arrows. Our *dawa* is our shield. When you are face to face with an AK-47 that is firing straight at you and nothing happens, you know our *dawa* is authentic."

In that case, we ask, how do the Mai Mai explain their dead and wounded?

"If one of our warriors is struck down, it is because he is a thief or a rapist or has disobeyed our rituals or was harboring bad thoughts about a comrade when he went into battle. Our dead are our sinners. We let our witch doctors bury them without ceremony." And the Banyamulenge? we ask. "They can remain in Congo if they accept Congolese law. If they don't, we shall kill them."

Venting his anger against Kinshasa, however, the colonel comes significantly close to sharing the sentiments expressed by Thomas the night before: "The Mai Mai have been neglected and marginalized. Kinshasa forgets too soon that we fought for them and saved their arses. When Mai Mai fighters join Kinshasa's army we become kings without kingdoms. They don't pay us and don't listen to us. As soldiers we are not allowed to vote. Better we return to the bush and look after ourselves." And as a parting question of us: "How much does a computer cost?"

In my novel, I have sketched in an armed attack on Bukavu airport. We are about to set off to inspect the reality when we learn that the center of town is blocked by demonstrators and burning tires. It seems that a man mortgaged his house for $400 in order to buy his wife a medical operation. When Kinshasa's unpaid soldiers heard about it, they raided

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his house, killed him and stole the money. Angry neighbors seized the soldiers, but their comrades sent reinforcements to get them back. A 15-year-old girl was shot dead and the crowd rioted. In our five nights in Bukavu, there were two riots.

After a tortuous drive through uneven back streets we reach the Goma road and drive northward along Lake Kivu's western shore. The airport is under the joint UN protection of Indian and Uruguayan troops. Not long ago, the Rwandans took the place over and remained there for several months without anybody interfering. The Uruguayan soldiers, who are not allowed into town, give us an excellent lunch and urge us to come back for a real party soon. "What would you do," I ask an officer, "if the airport came under surprise attack?" His right fist clenches and shoots forward as his left hand closes over his forearm. "*Vamos*," he replies.

The discothèque is my last and most affecting memory of Bukavu. In my novel, it is owned by the French-educated heir to an East Congolese trading fortune. He is a warlord of a sort, but his real power base is Bukavu's young intellectuals and businessmen. And here they are. There is a curfew and the town is quiet. A bit of rain is falling. I recall no winking signs or bulky men checking us at the entrance, just a gray row of little Art Deco buildings disappearing into the dark, and a rope bannister descending a dimly lit stone staircase. We grope our way down. Music and strobe lights engulf us. Yells of "Jason!" as he vanishes under a sea of welcoming black arms.

The Congolese, I had been told, know better than anybody how to have fun, and here at last they are having it. Away from the dance floor, a game of pool is running so I join the lookers-on. Round the table, deathly silence attends every shot. The last ball goes down. To hoots of joy, the victor is swept off his feet and carted in triumph round the room. At the bar, beautiful girls chatter and laugh. At our table, while I listen to somebody's views on Voltaire—or was it Proust?—Michela is politely discouraging a drunk. Jason has joined the men on the dance floor. I will leave him with the last word: "For all Congo's troubles, you meet fewer depressed guys on the streets of Bukavu than you do in New York."

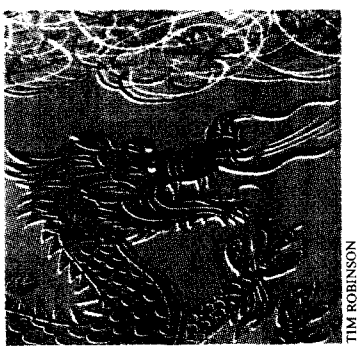
Would I have written the same novel if I'd gone to Congo earlier? I wonder whether I would have written a novel at all. The reality of the place is so overwhelming that stories about it seem almost an irrelevance. But then I wasn't really writing about Congo, was I? It was all those other things. Congo was just backcloth. ■

ENTHUSIASM FOR 'TRICKLE-DOWN ECONOMICS' IS BEHIND BRUTAL, AND GROWING, INEQUALITY.

China's Neoliberal Dynasty

PETER KWONG

Since 1978, when its market reforms began, China has clocked an average annual growth rate of 8.9 percent—the longest and most sustained growth of any country in modern history and one that has propelled it ahead of Britain to become, this year, the fourth-largest economy in the world.


TIM ROBINSON

As the country's economy surges forward, however, so does the pileup of social contradictions. China is the second-biggest emitter of carbon dioxide in the world. Seventy percent of the water in the country's lakes and rivers is undrinkable because of pollution. Environmental ills annually cause 300,000 deaths and cost $200 billion—equivalent to 10 percent of the gross domestic product—due to loss of work, medical expenses and government outlays.

More important, unimaginable problems have emerged from the migration of 150 million peasants who are victims of a decision to focus economic growth on urban expansion at the expense of rural development. In the cities the peasants live in shantytowns and work under conditions of extreme exploitation. Meanwhile, an estimated 20 million children have been left behind to fend for themselves, and rural authorities have noted a marked increase in robbery, petty crime, suicide and rape involving these unsupervised children. In cases where only the husbands depart for the cities, the wives are left to care for children and in-laws and to till the family farm. Many are so overburdened that they choose to end their lives, most commonly by swallowing pesticides. China has the highest rate of female suicide in the world, and its rural rate is three times that of the cities.

Call it China's Gilded Age of inequality. In 2003 average peasant yearly income was $317; the monthly wages of factory workers ranged between $62 and $100, which was only marginally higher than in 1993, although the economy grew by 10 percent annually during the same period. At roughly the same time, market research by *Seventeen* magazine found that many daughters of the wealthy in China's major cities got a monthly allowance of more than $100—the monthly salary for an experienced laborer. This year the city of Shanghai held a "millionaire fair," featuring displays of luxury sedans, yachts, a piece of jewelry priced at $25 million and a diamond-studded dog leash valued at $61,000.

According to a report by the China Rights Forum, the class

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that can afford such indulgences was not created through exceptional skill or merit; rather, 90 percent of China's 20,000 richest people are related to senior government or Communist Party officials at the center of political power and have benefited corruptly from these connections. Rural officials have found their own way to get rich by seizing land from peasants with minimal compensation and selling it at high prices to developers who build highrise apartments, factories and shopping malls. If discovered, corrupt officials evade punishment by escaping with their loot to foreign countries such as the United States, Canada and Thailand. The Chinese government has tried to repatriate some 800 of them, who have collectively made off with some $9 billion, but the extradition proceedings have been stalled because of China's refusal to cede the right of capital punishment against those convicted. Understandably, several editorials in Chinese publications critical of the government have wondered if this was not a ploy to prevent the return of individuals who could, if brought to trial, spill the beans about conspiring partners who still occupy high perches.

Leaders no longer try to win popular support based on ideology; rather, they appeal to nationalism or those who can maintain stability

The Chinese public is increasingly disenchanted with the rampant corruption that goes unaddressed and the growing disparity eating away at the once egalitarian social structure. In the estimate of David Zweig, a Chinese politics expert at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and a longtime China observer, "a protest begins in China every five minutes. If the protests run longer than five minutes, then there are two going on at the same time." China's Public Security Bureau reported that in 2004 the number of "mass incidents" had risen to 74,000. In 2005 the number jumped another 13 percent.

Though most of the "incidents" are generated by working-class discontent, even the previously passive middle class is growing restless. Between late 2005 and 2006 some 40,000 college students in several private universities have rioted. At one college students protested administrative changes that made their diplomas less prestigious than promised, after they had paid $2,500 a year to obtain them (a princely sum, given China's urban per capita income of $1,500). Faced with the prospect of unemployment, they expressed their frustration by smashing furniture and setting fire to school offices before spilling onto the streets to trash shops, cars and banks.

When the Communist Party appointed Hu Jintao as its general secretary in 2002, he promised to build "a harmonious society" of balanced growth and social equity. Concurrently appointed Premier Wen Jiabao promised to construct a new "socialist countryside" by improving living conditions for the farmers.

Four years later, they have failed to deliver. Their failure is not surprising, given the neoliberal economic policies that China has adopted from the very beginning of the so-called reforms, which got under way in the early 1980s. After all, when Deng Xiaoping announced that China should "let some get rich first, so others can get rich later," he openly condoned the inequality that would result from his reform process.

If this sounds like Ronald Reagan's neoliberal "trickle-down economics," it's because that's what it is. Both Reagan and Deng were fans of the neoliberal guru Milton Friedman, and since Friedman's first visit to China in 1980, Chinese leaders have followed his recipe of "getting the government off the people's back" by cutting government subsidies, shrinking social services, privatizing state enterprises, deregulating business and setting limits to labor's power to organize. Hu is not about to spoil the main reason for China's attractiveness to investors, which is its cheap labor, by increasing subsidies for the rural and urban poor. China's neoliberal Communist bureaucrats have been more interested in protecting employers than in insuring the safety of working people. This is evidenced by persistent labor safety violations that have led to spectacular industrial accidents, including gas explosions, mine cave-ins and flooding that killed 136,340 in 2003. While China accounted for 80 percent of the world's total coal mining–related deaths that year, it produced only 35 percent of the world's coal. A bill introducing labor laws to prevent the exploitation of workers, which was headed for the annual Chinese People's Congress this past spring, was tabled out of fear of scaring away investors after a spokesperson for the European Chamber of Commerce cautioned that it would increase Chinese production costs and "force foreign companies" to move production to Southeast Asia.

Not caring for its laboring class, however, doesn't mean that China is marching toward unadulterated capitalism. This year's People's Congress had been expected to enshrine the clause "Citizens' legal private property is inviolable" in the Constitution, but this, too, was shelved when resistance arose during the deliberations. The opposition was supposedly coming from the left, among them Beijing University law professor Gong Xiantian. He accused the legal experts who wrote the draft of "copying capitalist civil law like slaves" and protecting only the rights of a small minority of the extremely rich. His treatise, which was widely circulated on the Internet, concluded with the statement: "Socialist property is inviolable." But the main force against the right of private property did not come from starry-eyed devotees of Communist ideology—the purists and idealists of yore—but rather from unapologetic pragmatists who understand that the most important power of the Communist Party is its exclusive right to allocate the use of all public property. They do not want that privilege taken away.

The richest people in China are the relatives of the very top officials who used their position to pass laws transforming state-owned industries into stockholding companies, and then appointed family members as managers. In this way the children of top party officials—China's new "princelings"—took over China's most strategic and profitable industries: banking, transportation, power generation, natural resources, media and weapons. Once in management positions, they got loans from government-controlled banks, acquired foreign partners and listed their companies on Hong Kong or New York stock

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exchanges to raise more capital. The princelings enriched themselves each step of the way—not only as major shareholders of the companies but also from the kickbacks they got by awarding contracts to foreign firms. To call this "socialism with Chinese characteristics" is a farce. One veteran China watcher has defined it as "high-tech feudalism with Chinese characteristics."

Chinese leaders are no longer attempting to win popular support based on ideology, but by appealing to the traditional Chinese reverence for capable leaders who can maintain political stability, as the caring emperors of the dynastic past reputedly did. A few years ago, the state-run CCTV aired a forty-four-part blockbuster docudrama on the life of the Qing Emperor Yongzheng; it depicted him as a ruthless ruler who worked hard to improve the lives of his people and in the process rejuvenated the dynasty to last several generations after his death.

At the same time, these leaders are apprehensive of anyone capable of attracting a mass following, especially groups like Falun Gong, which originated as a health-conscious martial arts movement whose teachings on alternative healthcare and semi-religious lifestyle have gained enormous following among the urban and rural poor, who are deprived of public health services. The volatile combination of the sect's class and religious appeal, vaguely reminiscent of the mid-nineteenth-century movement that almost overthrew the Qing Dynasty, has led to its heavy-handed suppression.

When Hu first came to office, many in China had high expectations, but by now many intellectuals have come to believe that he is more conservative than his predecessor, Jiang Zemin, and determined to maintain the monopoly of the Chinese Communist Party by whatever means necessary. The Committee to Protect Journalists says China is the leading jailer of journalists in the world. The Chinese Ministry of Public Security's Internet and Security Supervision Bureau has a staff of more than 30,000, and the government has just enacted a new law to impose fines on domestic and foreign media organizations engaged in "unauthorized reporting" on incidents such as disasters, demonstrations and rural uprisings. The party has also invested billions in beefing up the People's Armed Police, now a 1 million–strong force trained, supposedly, to face "the threat of terrorism." With the exception of infrequent incidents involving Uighur separatists in the remote western region of Xinjiang, however, terrorism is all but unheard of in China. Rather, it is clear that the regime is getting ready to deal with workers' and peasants' unrest.

The tactics used by the government against dissent have turned increasingly violent. According to villagers, up to thirty people were reported killed last December when security forces fired on farmers in Dongzhou who were objecting to the confiscation of their fields. In Taishi, also in Guangdong Province, local government officials recruited thugs after the villagers hired a civil rights activist, Lu Banglie, to represent them in their bid to recall a corrupt village chief and elect members to their village committee to replace him. Lu was physically attacked and suffered serious injuries. In Dingzhou, southwest of Beijing, local party leaders hired gangsters to kill six farmers who refused to turn over their land for the construction of a power plant.

Even with this dubious record, Hu Jintao is assured of reconfirmation as party chair next year, owing to the fact that the other factions in the party that could challenge him—mainly the princelings and the Shanghai Gang, also known as "the GDPers" and led by former president Jiang Zemin—are responsible for the reckless growth at all cost and are therefore too discredited to contend for control. What's more, Hu's tough stance is calming to a party elite that fears revolution. For now, under one-party rule, without opposition and without elections, ordinary Chinese can only wait for the current "dynasty" to eventually collapse. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

places like Maywood, Ford Heights, Dixmoor and Robbins (all four among the poorest US municipalities), or in areas surrounding long-standing black enclaves like South Evanston. These are secondhand communities left behind by whites fleeing to the further reaches of the metropolitan area.

The vast majority of Chicago-area whites live in places with few, if any, black neighbors. Chicago's sprawling exurbs have provided an exit valve for whites from both the city and its older, diversifying, declining suburbs. It should come as no surprise that metro Chicago's most rapidly growing outer suburban counties (DeKalb and Grundy) are also the whitest. The racially divided real estate market is the consequence of market-driven discrimination and the legacy of public policies that promoted racial separation and exclusion. As a result, blacks have had—and still have—much less mobility and choice than whites. Race is not the only cause of sprawl. But sprawl in the United States has exacerbated economic and racial inequality.

I'm not sure what Bruegmann means when he attributes my analysis of sprawl and inequality to my "background." But when he disavows his libertarian proclivities, he is being more than a bit disingenuous about his own background. Bruegmann is a member of the speakers' bureau of the Heartland Institute, a Chicago-based think tank that is "devoted to discovering and promoting free-market solutions to social and economic problems." And he recently published an essay on sprawl in a collection of essays on "market-based strategies for land use planning," co-edited by Randall Holcombe and Samuel Staley, both affiliated with the Reason Foundation's Urban Futures program. The Heartland Institute and the Reason Foundation are right-wing libertarian organizations in the vanguard of the conservative challenge to the "smart growth" movement. Check out their websites and you will discover that Bruegmann's criticism of the anti-sprawl movement echoes the right's standard litany of charges against land-use and environmental regulation.

THOMAS SUGRUE

KUDOS TO SWANK FILER!

Colorado Springs

■ Frank Lewis is a gem. Among the many reasons for subscribing to *The Nation*, the main one for me is the pleasure of working out his puzzles' clues, with their references to music, literature, history and culture, topped off by the gleeful nature of his puns and clever wordplay. Even when the world often seems to be hurtling toward disaster and misery, his puzzles bring me joy.

MEG REMPLE

Mr. Lewis, who has been setting our puzzle since 1947, recently celebrated his 94th birthday. Happy birthday, Frank!

—THE EDITORS

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Music of My Mind

DAVID YAFFE

BLOWIN' HOT AND COOL: Jazz and Its Critics.
By John Gennari.
Chicago. 480 pp. $35.

Amiri Baraka, in his 1984 *Autobiography*, recalls a fistfight with the legendary composer and bassist Charles Mingus outside the Five Spot, one of Manhattan's hippest jazz clubs in the 1950s and '60s. Mingus took one look at the jazz critic and slugged him, only to have Baraka slugging back in his best Sugar Ray imitation. "I'm sorry," Mingus said. "I made a mistake. I was wrong." As Baraka explained with more than a touch of self-flattery, "I guess he meant because he thought he could just slap me and walk away, having chastised some jive intellectual. But I'd ducked and dodged around some much meaner with they hands mf's than Charlie Mingus."

At least the two men came to an understanding, even if it was unclear how, after their scuffle, Mingus assessed Baraka's chops as a jive intellectual. Not all conflicts between jazz critics and their subjects have been resolved so easily, as John Gennari points out in *Blowin' Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics*. The book includes a few other moments when the musicians turned the tables on their professional scrutinizers. Pianist Cecil Taylor, after being outed by his onetime champion Stanley Crouch, responded with an equally ferocious poem. Mingus, in his memoir *Beneath the Underdog*, imagined how pathetic a group of ofay jazz critics would sound jamming on the bandstand. And in 1961 Miles Davis hosted an extravagant "press conference in reverse" at his Central Park West penthouse, in which he, Cannonball Adderly, Horace Silver, Philly Joe Jones and other legendary musicians engaged in a playful but revealing interrogation of Martin Williams, Nat Hentoff, Dan Morgenstern and other notable tastemakers. "What qualification does a jazz critic need?" asked Silver. "Anybody can be a jazz critic," Hentoff admitted. "The standards are very low." Hentoff, whose own jazz criticism has set a particularly high standard for more than half a century, had a good point.

Gennari, an assistant professor of English at the University of Vermont, has not been living in jazz's most exciting moment, but he has come along at a fortuitous time for jazz studies, a growth industry in the academy. The book had its origins as an American Studies dissertation, and was then revised and refined over more than a decade. Jazz critics usually scribble notes in dark, smoky clubs and then hastily turn in copy in a caffeinated rush of deadlines, cobbled anecdotes and many, many adjectives. With a few exceptions, they tend to be neither technically proficient musicians nor credentialed scholars but former English majors and sometimes lapsed humanities graduate students—a venerable tradition in cultural journalism.

Anybody can be a jazz critic, much as anybody can be a jazz musician, regardless of degree, much as anybody can be a jazz musician regardless of degree or passion.

There are a few PhDs discussed in Gennari's book, but none did their scholarly work on jazz, which was an impossible pursuit until relatively recently: Marshall Stearns taught medieval literature at Hunter while founding the Institute of Jazz Studies; Barry Ulanov taught theater history at Barnard while editing *Metronome*; and Albert Goldman, after receiving a PhD in English at Columbia, fled academe for hired hackdom after learning that an entry-level Brooklyn College instructor made less money than a subway conductor. Williams received a mas-

David Yaffe, assistant professor of English at Syracuse University, is the author of Fascinating Rhythm: Reading Jazz in American Writing *(Princeton).*

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ter's in English from the University of Pennsylvania, and Gennari, who received his PhD from the same institution, demonstrates that the lessons of New Criticism weren't lost on the most influential jazz critic of his time. Hentoff, for his part, left Harvard's American Civilization graduate program after a year when he met resistance to the idea of taking black artists seriously in general and writing a Duke Ellington dissertation in particular. He may have bemoaned the standards of jazz criticism, but higher education was not exactly friendly to it back in the 1950s.

And so Gennari's book does for jazz critics what most of them were unable to do for themselves, but with a postmodern twist: The scholar demystifies and historicizes the journalists. The first sustained scholarly book exclusively about jazz criticism—and, not least, about the passions that have driven and surrounded it—*Blowin' Hot and Cool* is thorough, absorbing and original, an obsessive study of professional obsessives that will circumvent the need for any other.

In the introduction, Gennari cites Thelonious Monk's maxim that "if you want to know what's going on in jazz, ask a musician." Yet Monk's statement doesn't necessarily undercut the need for jazz critics—or even a book about jazz critics. What it implies is that the best jazz criticism—really, like the best criticism of any art—has to be informed by the artists. This may seem like an obvious point, but considering that jazz was in its most vital periods of development during segregation and the early, tumultuous years of the civil rights movement, it required a considerable cultural crossing among the people who wrote about it, many of whom were white men from privileged backgrounds.

Of all these privileged white men, none were more influential, or more stricken with racial and class guilt, than John Hammond. To call Hammond a man of wealth and taste would be an understatement on both counts. An heir to the Vanderbilt fortune, Hammond grew up with every extravagance offered to the most well-heeled beneficiaries of the Gilded Age. Armed with a trust fund to get him through the Depression years, he started out as a jazz critic, but his real legacy was as a legendary Columbia Records producer and talent scout who counted among his discoveries Billie Holiday, Count Basie, Charlie Christian, Benny Goodman, Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, Aretha Franklin and Bruce Springsteen.

All of these artists could have been recognized without Hammond, but he managed to get there first. He championed racial integration back in the 1930s (reporting on the Scottsboro case for *The Nation*), but when he persuaded Benny Goodman to break the racial barrier by including Charlie Christian and Lionel Hampton on his session, he wasn't doing it merely out of political principle; he knew it would be good for music, which for him was also good for business. He was notoriously wrong about Ellington's politics and high-art aspirations, and idiotically forbade Billie Holiday to record the lynching dirge "Strange Fruit" for Columbia (he thought it was "artistically the worst thing that ever happened to her"), but it was extraordinary that this company man to the manor born was right as often as he was. (Hammond is also the subject of a new biography, Dunstan Prial's serviceable but hardly revelatory *The Producer: John Hammond and the Soul of America*.)

White jazz critics crossed the racial divide but also embodied it, since they judged an art whose most distinguished creators were black.

Gennari's first chapter opens with Hammond acting as a jazz Virgil for the English critic Leonard Feather on Feather's first trip to New York. The pairing of the two men in 1935 not only consolidated the two most influential jazz critics of the decade but also set the tone for what Gennari calls the "*Ur*-stance of the jazz critic: poised on the seam between artistic creation and popular consumption, close to but also crucially distinct from the dancing mass body, caught up in an imagined sense of privileged intellectual and emotional communion with the music." Hammond and Feather were, in other words, the original jazz nerds, or as the section heading calls them, "White Guys Without Dates." But while their detached scrutiny may have seemed unduly removed from the physicality of the jitterbugging around them—something about white critics that was not lost on Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray and Stanley Crouch—their geeky pose also had a serious purpose: They were determined to make the case that this mass entertainment was also high art. In the 1930s, this stance was as counterintuitive as it was radical.

Before jazz acquired mainstream respectability in the 1980s (and various alternative monikers, such as "America's classical music" and "black art music"), jazz criticism was an adventure, a hierarchically indeterminate project of discovery—and self-discovery. Leonard Feather and Stanley Dance leapt across the pond for Ellington, Hammond migrated from New Haven to Kansas City juke joints to spread the word on Basie, and Williams and Hentoff fled academe to raise intellectual standards in jazz criticism. Just after the publication of Norman Mailer's notorious 1957 essay in *Dissent*, "The White Negro," Hentoff wrote that Mailer's statement that "jazz is orgasm" "is not too far from the legend that 'all God's chillun got rhythm,' particularly the darker ones." Getting jazz right was an aesthetic matter, but for Hentoff it was a moral one as well. Baraka, when he wasn't dodging punches from Charles Mingus, summed it up back in 1963 as the critic formerly known as LeRoi Jones, then a necessary black voice in a largely white domain: "Most jazz critics have been white men, but most important jazz musicians have not been." Gennari is keenly attuned to this fact, not only when critics like Hammond and Hentoff were politically engaged but also when *The New Yorker*'s Whitney Balliett confected elegant metaphors and when Williams defined a tradition of universal transcendence; being postracial in the 1950s was a luxury African-American musicians couldn't afford. Gennari searches high and low for these cultural divides and finds that while Ralph Gleason had high intellectual aspirations for jazz criticism, he was also at his boldest and funkiest in obscure girlie magazines like *Rogue* and *Gem*.

The 1960s divided jazz critics like everyone else in that decade, and what had been a problematic crossing became a war zone, as Gennari describes in his fascinating chapter "The Shock of the New." Martin Williams liked Ornette Coleman but not later John Coltrane. LeRoi Jones became Amiri Baraka, left his Jewish wife, Hettie, and their two daughters and spouted anti-Semitic agitprop from the Village Gate. Gleason became, as Gennari described him, the "Dutch Uncle" of the hippies and helped found *Rolling Stone*. Dan Morgenstern tried to find virtues of the "new thing" of 1964 while still drawing lines in the sand. And for Frank Kofsky, a Jewish Trotskyist historian who heard the sound of the coming black revolution in Coltrane and Archie Shepp, if you

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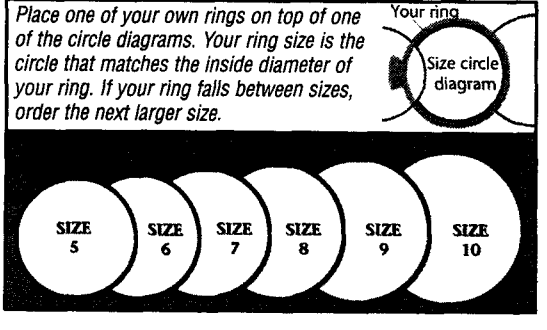

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weren't part of the solution, you were part of the problem, even including SNCC organizer Jackie McLean, whom Kofsky dismissed as "another one of the Establishment's good niggers in jazz." The one thing, it seemed, that nearly every jazz critic held in common was a contempt for the 1965 Moynihan Report, which Albert Murray called "the folklore of white supremacy and the fakelore of black pathology."

Between the 1920s and the '60s, jazz criticism was a topical subject, but by the '70s, notwithstanding the splendors of the loft scene, the debates became more archival, and Gennari's finds in this area are formidable. He digs up a well-meaning but shoddy 1960 journal essay by Jack Kerouac, who wrote that Quincy Jones was a bass player and described Red Garland, somewhat vaguely, as "a strange thinker, actually." Jazz critics can be strange thinkers, too: In the book's central coup, Gennari unearths the correspondence between Ross Russell and Albert Goldman on Charlie Parker, housed in archives at the University of Texas, Austin. In these letters, written while Russell was working on *Bird Lives!*, his Parker biography, we get critics unfiltered, and Goldman gives a sense of what some of the white hipsters were saying about their black fetish objects behind closed doors (or, in this case, excavated from vaults). Russell, whom Miles Davis once likened to a vampire, was given the following writerly advice from Goldman: "I feel that for such a great cocksman your treatment of [Parker's] sex life is disappointing.... How about the faggot angle? You told me that Bird was intimate with [singer] Earl Coleman.... Please make sure you're not copping out in this area. It's a very important theme."

After a thorough, engrossing investigation of about half a century of criticism, Gennari's final chapter, "Tangled Up in Blues," charting the more recent debates in jazz criticism, feels oddly tame. The jazz wars of the 1990s revolved around a single musician—the trumpeter/composer Wynton Marsalis, who has excoriated anything that veers from his particular take on the jazz tradition—and the institution that he directs, Jazz at Lincoln Center. Gennari shows his hand in the conclusion, counting himself "among those aggrieved by the Lincoln Center jazz program's denigration of the post-1958 avant-garde." But he's so determined to be fair to all sides that his true polemic never quite comes across. Having traversed fifty years of rancorous debate, the book lands in the present—and takes a polite dodge vis-à-vis the conflicts in jazz today.

Gennari begins the final chapter with a perfect setup for irony: Gary Giddins thanking Crouch for his generosity in his acknowledgments to *Celebrating Bird*, the short book on Parker he completed while Crouch was working on a longer—and still much anticipated—Bird biography. He then lays out Crouch's idea of the jazz tradition, influenced by Albert Murray and Ralph Ellison, one that venerates Armstrong, Basie, Ellington and Bechet, and expands (beyond Murray's and Ellison's predilections) to a canon that includes Parker, Monk (Wynton Marsalis's favorite musician), Mingus, Ornette Coleman (when acoustic and appropriately swinging), John Coltrane (up to mid-1965) and Miles Davis (up to 1968) but not fusion or anything too European (including most ECM recordings and anything involving Cecil Taylor) or too rock-influenced, and definitely nothing that has the faintest whiff of hip-hop.

Today's jazz wars have revolved around Wynton Marsalis, who has excoriated anything that veers from what he defines as tradition.

There are, of course, plenty of jazz critics with a broader musical palette, like Francis Davis, a protégé of Pauline Kael, and Greg Tate, whose post-hip-hop black and cross-racial aesthetic Gennari praises for its originality. But when Gennari discusses the "strongest critics of the Murray/Crouch jazz model," he devotes his attention to writers who have held out the torch for allegedly marginalized white musicians: most notably, Richard Sudhalter, James Lincoln Collier and Terry Teachout. What about Gary Giddins, who has no racial ax to grind? Giddins (who is discussed elsewhere in the same chapter) shares many of Crouch's passions but has also championed many of the musicians whom Crouch either disdains (Dave Douglas, Don Byron, Matthew Shipp) or repudiated after years of fervent advocacy (Cecil Taylor, David Murray). And when he was a staff writer for the *Village Voice*, Giddins published blistering attacks on Marsalis, reprinted in two essay collections. (Crouch gives his account of the jazz wars in his recent collection *Considering Genius*.) But the chapter shies away from the feud after nearly setting the stage for it.

Still, this shying away from confrontation—in the last of eight chapters—shouldn't detract from the overall achievement of Gennari's thoughtful, original and impressive book. Jazz is not only in need of serious criticism, it is in need of serious criticism of its criticism. The best critics are self-critics as well, and are often the first to defer to the musicians. The mind of Martin Williams may have done much to canonize the mind of Ornette Coleman, but is it nearly as interesting a place to dwell? Surely not, just as writing *The Jazz Tradition* is less notable than recording *The Shape of Jazz to Come*. Williams himself would have certainly agreed. "I've often considered writing a column dedicated to the proposition that musicians are the only qualified critics," he wrote in *Down Beat*, undercutting his authority from his own perch.

Williams was, of course, overstating the case, and he wasn't about to give himself a pink slip (though he did end up spending his final years at the Smithsonian, a move from criticism to curatorial work that reveals much about what was happening to the music). Even so, his invitation for the musicians to have the final say makes sense, and after spending all these pages with jazz critics, even more of a musical response would have been welcome. Many books have been written from the musicians' point of view (A.B. Spellman's *4 Lives in the Bebop Business*, Valerie Wilmer's *As Serious as Your Life*, Arthur Taylor's *Notes and Tones*, the memoirs of Ellington, Mingus and Miles), and this is the first serious consideration of critics, but those moments of reverb between musicians and critics were so tantalizing, I wanted to hear a few more bars. "Jazz *speaks*," writes Gennari in his eloquent introduction, "through means that can make post-performance written accounts seem secondary or even superfluous." Indeed, but who gets the last word in the book? "May the noise forever clamor, and may we listen and learn," says Gennari, seemingly optimistic about the current state of jazz writing. But does jazz really get enough of the criticism it deserves? Hentoff was certainly right to defer to the musicians in Miles Davis's living room, and his point about the low standards in jazz criticism is still worth pondering. If only more of it was up to Gennari's impeccably high standards. Gennari writes about jazz critics with an impressive scholarly command, but I wanted the musicians to speak back a little more, even if it meant getting a little roughed up by Charles Mingus. ■

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The Illusionist

TOBIAS JONES

THE SACK OF ROME: How a Beautiful European Country with a Fabled History and a Storied Culture Was Taken Over by a Man Named Silvio Berlusconi.
By Alexander Stille. Penguin. 384 pp. $25.95.

It's difficult to think of a country that looks so different from inside or outside as Italy. For anyone who doesn't live there, Italy has always seemed an Edenic garden of culture and style. The sighs of centuries of grand tourists resound through history as they swoon in front of the splendors of the "beautiful country" with its "sweet life." But for anyone who actually lives in Italy, the country can be infuriating and depressing. The daily confrontation with dishonesty becomes numbing. There's frequently an inability to use language for meaning rather than its wonderful rhetorical sound. After a while the Arcadia begins to look a little soiled.

It's not grumpy foreigners who make such criticisms but Italians themselves. They use the term *all'italiana* to imply something botched, done on the cheap. If you say something has been done *all'italiana* it means performed with a bit of cunning, possibly creating tidy profits for an inner circle. Italians refer to their country as a *casino*, literally a brothel. It's a place where everyone has a story of being ripped off, of having been conned by some trickster's daring and seduction.

That discrepancy between native and foreign impressions of Italy means that almost all non-Italians have been astonished by the rise and endurance of Silvio Berlusconi. We foreigners just don't get it. It's impossible that a country so full of culture and refinement could twice elect as prime minister a man who is at best very vulgar, at worst a lying criminal. Berlusconi is a man who made millions of dollars in real estate deals in the 1970s with heavy backing from mystery investors. He used political friendships to create a near-monopoly of private TV stations to rival the three public ones. His window dressing was to own a football team, AC Milan, which won trophy after trophy. He has won two general elections (in 1994 and 2001) and this year lost by less than one-tenth of 1 percent to Romano Prodi.

Berlusconi enjoys political loyalty from millions of Italians even though much of his career is terrifyingly close to the underworld. He employed a Sicilian criminal, Vittorio Mangano, as protector at his huge villa at Arcore, and one of his closest *consiglieri*, Marcello Dell'Utri, has recently been convicted of *associazione mafiosa*. He is appealing the conviction and may well be cleared, but he has admitted to a series of bizarre coincidences that raise eyebrows almost to the hairline. In the 2001 election, Berlusconi won 100 percent of the Sicilian seats.

REUTERS/NEWSCOM

Berlusconi at his final news conference as prime minister, May 16

There's so much smoke surrounding Berlusconi that many are convinced there must be much fire. The surprise discoveries about him—that he was a member of an occasionally murderous masonic lodge, that he bought his villa from a grieving young girl through callous deceit and worthless shares—certainly don't enhance his reputation. He has been found guilty on many occasions, but the statute of limitations usually means that by the time a particular crime has come to the Supreme Court it has passed its "crime-by" date and he has been absolved.

The fact that a man with such suspicions hanging over him has twice been prime minister is truly amazing. The demanding question isn't How bad is Berlusconi? (the answer, at least to me, seems obvious) but What does his electoral strength say about the Italian electorate? That question leads you toward what the writer Carlo Levi called the elusive "artichoke" of Italy: You keep peeling away the rough leaves but never quite arrive at the heart of the thing. I have a friend in Parma who repeatedly says that anyone who votes for Berlusconi is either ignorant or in bad faith: Either Berlusconi's supporters are unaware of his history or they know about it and don't care. It's a very negative view, but hard to dispute. And yet very frequently I find myself at dinner with people I assume are appalled by the Berlusconi phenomenon only to find them passionately trying to explain it. After another glass of wine they're defending Berlusconi vigorously. They compare him to Thatcher and Reagan. Like that uncompromising couple from the 1980s, Berlusconi sees the state as the problem, not the solution. That chimes with voters: If there's one thing that really riles Italians, it's their public services and public servants—bureaucratic, they say, inefficient, lazy, cheating, probably making money somewhere on the side.

It's not really true—many schools and hospitals you go to put the British versions to shame. But that is the narrative: Italians feel betrayed by everyone around them. Bad luck at the hands of the state is as much a part of conversation as Sunday's soccer. Berlusconi deliberately portrays himself as a man who ignores vast elements of that state (including its justice system) and is admired for doing so. He casts himself as a victim, repeatedly talking about his suffering and his "crossing of the desert." Berlusconi is the little guy, expert at exploiting this sense of *vittimismo*. People love him because they think he's the archetypal downtrodden Italian. He's an underdog who has come out on top. He's been threatened and blackmailed and hounded, but he's a winner. For many Italians he is the mirror image of themselves, or what they wish they were.

Moreover, the fact that Berlusconi suffers from conflicts of interest actually makes him, in the eyes of millions, a popular choice as premier. He is so rich, they say, that he couldn't ever be corrupted. He's more honest about whose interests he's looking after: his own, just like every other politician and voter. It's cynicism on the cusp of respectability, pretending to be idealistic clarity. And only in Italy is democracy seen as so stagnant and disrespectable, where nothing gets decided or done, that a strong-man leader (bordering on the postdemocratic) suddenly appears not threatening but rather useful.

Tobias Jones is the author of The Dark Heart of Italy *(North Point). His next book,* Utopian Dreams *(Faber & Faber UK), will be published in January.*

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It's a fantastic subject, and quite a few people have approached it from various angles: My own book about life under Berlusconi was a first-person diary that fumed disbelief and fury more than analysis (I was an angry young man). Paul Ginsborg's *Silvio Berlusconi* was a brief attempt to talk about theories surrounding postdemocratic politics. David Lane, *The Economist*'s correspondent in Rome, published an impeccable investigation called *Berlusconi's Shadow*, but it was more biography than anthropology. Alexander Stille takes the best of all those approaches and fuses them into a convincing whole. But for a daft subtitle, *The Sack of Rome* is an excellent book. It has everything: momentum and suspense, factual presentation and leveled analysis. The only problem is that, due to the lead character, it's not exactly a pleasure to read: It's the kind of book you read bolt upright with straight arms and a permanent grimace.

Stille's great strength is his position as both an insider and an outsider. His father was an editor of the daily *Corriere della Sera*, and Stille knows Italy as well as, if not better than, many natives. But he comes to his subject with the moral clarity of someone untouched by Italian compromise and corruption. That position allows him to be intimate and informed, while simultaneously critical and, often, scathing. He describes what life was like in Italy when he first went there, long before Berlusconi burst onto the political scene: "Old grey men with their hats and suspenders and handlebar moustaches represented the last remnants of an era when city squares filled with people who wanted to talk about politics. For these old men, born long before the age of television, getting out of the house and talking politics was a form of entertainment and sociability."

The narrative traces the descent from the idealism and intelligence of a print-based culture into a "world in which personality, celebrity, money and media control are the driving forces." When Stille met Berlusconi he found him to be "psychologically one of the strangest people I had ever met. I had never before interviewed anyone who told so many obvious untruths with such enthusiastic conviction." That is the kernel of the difference between the verbal and visual worlds: For Berlusconi everything is about appearance. What is actually true is irrelevant; it's what is perceived to be true that counts. Truth becomes whatever you can get away with saying. In that sense Berlusconi is very much a product of his culture: I know of no other country where illusionism, rhetoric and distraction so frequently substitute the search for simple, old-fashioned facts.

The Lives They Led

THE EMPEROR'S CHILDREN. By Claire Messud. Knopf. 431 pp. $25.

Initially, *The Emperor's Children*—Claire Messud's superb comedy of manners following a sliver of New York's literary beau monde before and after September 11—appears to be about aging Ivy Leaguers who can't get no satisfaction. Three friends, once classmates at Brown, are now 30 and struggling (sort of). Beautiful, unemployed Marina Thwaite has moved back home with her parents to give "one last push" on a book on children's clothes she's been commissioned to write but can't seem to finish. Whether the inertia is due to the inhibiting shadow of her world-famous journalist father, Murray Thwaite, or to lack of discipline, who can say? Danielle Minkoff has, unlike Marina, a job and an apartment, but her work producing TV documentaries is ever wanting in intellectual fulfillment, and she has no boyfriend with whom to share the small consolatory luxuries she allows herself, specifically her bed's fine sheets. Completing the trio is Julius Clarke, a gay, bed-hopping freelance writer groping for stability in both work and love.

Within several chapters, the spell of Messud's unerring, lissome prose is cast, and it becomes clear that we are in for far more than the exploits of a few bourgie Manhattanites fumbling with adulthood. The arrival of two outsiders—Ludovic Seeley, an unctuous Australian magazine editor intent on storming the New York literary scene, and Murray's 19-year-old nephew, Bootie Tubb, a self-righteous and socially awkward autodidact painted with the antiheroic shades of Ignatius J. Reilly—unsettles and deepens the novel's world, as it heads toward the more radical cataclysm of 9/11. But the story's power lies not in what happens to these people but rather, as the book's epigraph from Anthony Powell avers, in "what they think happens to them," in the revelation of their carefully nurtured personal myths and what each has at stake in preserving them. As the narrative perspective shifts from character to character, we experience each one from up close and from afar, rounding them out, and subtly delineating the gulf between what they imagine they know of themselves and what we know of them. With Murray, perhaps the novel's most marbled character, Messud renders this contradiction with exceptional nuance. When he seduces Danielle, the satirical punch isn't that this pillar of "moral journalism" could act so immorally, it's that someone who prides himself on both passion and plain speech could so tediously intellectualize screwing his daughter's friend: "He reveled in the many-ness of it all, all the things he was, and was to her, Danielle—journalistic eminence, husband, father of her best friend, potential mentor, old and flailing body—all these things torn away by their mutual desire, that left him a mere stripling in this time-traveled ship, attended but unmolested by the ghosts of his selves."

This—the characters' consistency in getting themselves wrong—is what makes *The Emperor's Children* so richly tragicomic. It's also what puts Messud's narrative gifts brilliantly on display. The two-time PEN/Faulkner finalist (and frequent contributor to *The Nation*'s Books and Arts section) writes with the archness of a Muriel Spark, only more subtly and sympathetically wielded. Not even Danielle, who retains the most dignity throughout the novel, escapes gentle narrative derision where her self-delusions invite it. Ultimately, most impressive is the way Messud relates 9/11 to her characters' lives: The public tragedy doesn't eclipse but rather seeps into and amplifies their private sorrows. "Mostly," Danielle reflects at the novel's end, "people's tragedies were small." Whether she's thinking about the botched liposuctions she's researching for work or the fact that she will never have a real relationship with Murray is ambiguous; in a sense, it doesn't matter. She has learned something indispensable about the nature of life's tragedies: They don't compete; they compound. —*Kate Levin*

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The facts of Berlusconi's career are by now well established. He made his money thanks to the influx of billions of lire that were paid in cash into Swiss bank accounts in the 1970s (8 billion in 1977 alone). Those investors remain anonymous, and Berlusconi has steadfastly refused to shed light on the mysterious transactions. There is a suspicion, repeated by Stille, that Berlusconi's businesses were simply giant washing machines for Mafia money. Such suspicions are only exacerbated by the overlap of Forza Italia (Berlusconi's political party) and Cosa Nostra: "Forza Italia," Stille says with characteristic sarcasm, "has a curious habit of picking representatives who share Dell'Utri's unlucky record of embarrassing encounters with organized crime figures."

Although Stille calls Berlusconi a "robber baron," the book is much more than a character assassination. Stille manages to portray Berlusconi as a complex, contradictory character. The author is sufficiently evenhanded to quote discrepant opinions: One interviewee says that "Berlusconi is one of the coldest people I've ever met. He does nothing that is not strictly calculated. These friendships are based on blackmail. The people in his inner circle are the ones who know where all the skeletons in the closet are hidden." Another says something rather different: "I have spent time with Berlusconi's secretary, Marinella, and I have no doubt that if she knew a bullet were heading toward Berlusconi she would put herself in front of it. Not many people can count on that kind of loyalty." Perhaps the key to understanding Berlusconi is his obsession with folly. He loves to project an image of himself as an impulsive genius, subject to sudden inspiration. His favorite book is Erasmus's *The Praise of Folly*.

Facts and figures pepper the pages of *The Sack of Rome* and remind the reader of what the reality is: An obsession with legality leads, paradoxically, to lawlessness. "Italy," says Stille, "leads Europe... in having some 90,000 laws in force (compared with 7,325 in France and 5,587 in Germany)." Transparency International, a company that measures corruption throughout the world, now ranks Italy below African countries like Namibia and Botswana. Bribes bleed about 6.3 billion euros ($8 billion) a year from the Italian economy. The number of illegal buildings rocketed by 41 percent from 2001 to 2003. Such shady financing is possible because there are only 240 large corporations listed on the Italian stock exchange. The rest are privately held and, usually, family-owned. There's a focus on profit, not probity. Little

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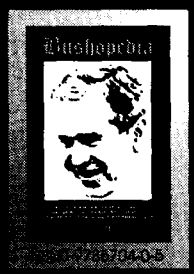

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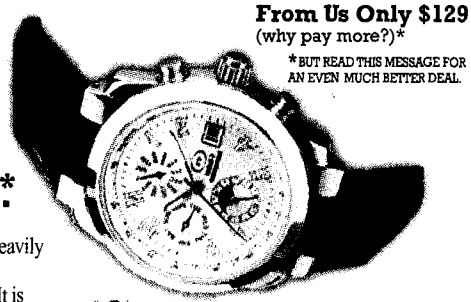

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surprise, then, that foreign investors withdrew $17 billion from Italy during Berlusconi's first government.

Nor do any of these facts ever get reported inside Italy. Reporters Without Borders, an organization monitoring freedom of the press throughout the world, rates Italy fifty-third in the world, behind Uruguay, Albania and Madagascar. In the European elections of 1999, Berlusconi offered the country some 803 political advertisements. That led to a conundrum his opponents still haven't solved: "Since public TV in Italy does not broadcast political ads," Stille writes, "the center-left was in the impossible position of either giving money to its opponent or doing without television advertising." This in a country in which the average adult watches 235 minutes of television each day. (In 2001 only 6.4 percent of Italians used newspapers as their principal means of information; 77.4 percent used television.)

Stille's conclusion sounds a warning to America about the dangers of this kind of cozy relationship between news organizations, high finance and central government. He compares Berlusconi to the New Jersey Democrat Jon Corzine and New York City's Republican Mayor Mike Bloomberg. The point about Italian illusionism is relevant in America, where, says Stille, "for years, conservatives...have accused the left of 'moral relativism,' of denying the existence of a universal moral code, the 'eternal verities' of traditional society. But it is in fact the new right who are genuine postmodernists and don't believe in any stable truth. 'It's all just opinion,' as Richard Viguerie put it."

There's only one problem with Stille's studious work: timing. It's published just as Berlusconi has been shunted off the political stage and comes in the wake of dozens of other studies in both English and Italian. There will doubtless be another chapter or two in the Berlusconi fable: He's not the kind of man to wander off with quiet dignity. *The Sack of Rome* comes too late to offer a running commentary on a politician at his peak, and yet too soon to give the reader a sense of the last act and the Berlusconi legacy. ■

Unnatural Disaster

ARI KELMAN

THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE AND FIRESTORMS OF 1906: How San Francisco Nearly Destroyed Itself. By Philip Fradkin. California. 418 pp. $15.95.

SAN FRANCISCO IS BURNING: The Untold Story of the 1906 Earthquake and Firestorm. By Dennis Smith. Plume. 294 pp. $15. Paper.

A CRACK IN THE EDGE OF THE WORLD: America and the Great California Earthquake of 1906. By Simon Winchester. HarperCollins. 462 pp. $27.95.

It was dumb luck that most of San Francisco was fast asleep when the city began shaking at 5:12 AM on April 18, 1906. Had it been later in the morning, main arteries clogged with traffic, or midday, the city center humming, the carnage would have been worse. Instead, most people woke abruptly and took cover when the quake didn't pass quickly enough to be mistaken for a bad dream. It lingered for nearly a minute, an eternity for terrified San Franciscans. In an instant, the ground in some parts of town liquefied; whole blocks of poorly constructed tenements slumped into piles of rubble, entombing those inside. Even monumental buildings, constructed to embody state power or Gilded Age prosperity—the US Post Office; the West's most luxurious hotels and grandest office buildings; and the still-new City Hall, a Beaux-Arts monument that captured San Francisco's ostentatious sense of itself at the dawn of a new century—all suffered significant structural damage. It was, without question, the worst disaster in a city whose short history had already been punctuated by earthquakes and fires. And the horror had just begun.

Then the shaking stopped. The city righted itself. The infamous San Andreas Fault, where two massive tectonic plates rub each other the wrong way for approximately 750 miles, along much of California's length, had released some of its vast storehouse of energy. People crept from their hiding places, from beneath tables or beds, and began looking for loved ones, surveying the damage and considering how to rebuild shattered landscapes and lives. There were aftershocks, but nothing remotely as jarring as the initial event. As it turned out, people had felt the shaking throughout most of California and beyond: from Coos Bay in Oregon to Anaheim, just south of Los Angeles; from well into the Pacific Ocean all the way inland to Winnemucca, in northern Nevada's arid interior. An area of roughly 400,000 miles had experienced some seismic activity. But San Francisco and its environs absorbed the brunt of the damage. The wounds were going to become far worse; the most severe would be self-inflicted. Blazes were just starting to burn around the city, born of urban life upended: cracked gas lines, scattered cooking fires, or candles and oil lamps toppled during the quake.

With the quake centennial recently passed and vast swaths of New Orleans still in ruins, the time has come to reappraise San Francisco's 1906 earthquake. Philip Fradkin, Dennis Smith and Simon Winchester certainly think so. These authors couldn't have known that New Orleans would drown as their books were published, hype not even the shrewd folks in marketing could concoct. That said, Hurricane Katrina, even if it provided a sales bump, did these books no favors. All three authors use the 9/11 attacks as their benchmark for urban disaster. Consequently, their books feel dated, victims of the truism that we're all subject to the whims of unfolding history—even historians. And yet New Orleans's ongoing travails remind readers that to understand disaster we must look beyond spectacle, no matter how dramatic or gruesome, and focus our gaze instead on politics. Fradkin, to his credit, understands this, while Smith and Winchester are concerned with other issues: for Smith, a historian of fire and firefighters, the conflagration that cropped up after the quake; for Winchester, who seems incapable of discarding even the most fleeting thoughts that pass through his head, whatever seems relevant at the moment. So it is that Fradkin's work is the most illuminating in these seasons of catastrophe. His book demonstrates that the earthquake and fires created winners and losers, that the tragedy was manipulated for political gain—and, more broadly, that disasters, so often mislabeled "natural," are really a horrible out-

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growth of the most human of concerns: politics.

Fradkin cuts to the chase in the first line of his preface: "San Franciscans, not the inanimate forces of nature, were primarily responsible for the extensive chaos, damage, injuries, and deaths in the great earthquake and firestorms of 1906." The fires especially, he says, were a product of poor planning and negligence. After the quake ended, with the city in chaos, there was no way to communicate across town, much less the nation. Huge chasms had opened in some streets. A herd of longhorn cattle stampeded through town. San Francisco's fire chief, Dennis Sullivan, lay dying from injuries sustained when a building collapsed around him. The Army's Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston, stationed at the time in San Francisco, stepped into the leadership gap and assumed command of firefighting efforts in the city. The city's mayor, Eugene Schmitz, and former mayor, James Phelan, a banker who still dreamed of higher office, took nominal control of civil affairs—though "control" badly exaggerates their grip. With the city burning on the day of the quake, Funston decided to use explosives to create firebreaks intended to stop the blaze from spreading. It was a bad choice. The resulting explosions started more fires, creating a firestorm that ultimately charred five square miles, razed nearly 30,000 buildings and left tens of thousands homeless. San Francisco, Fradkin concludes, was destroyed by the people charged with saving it.

The idea that natural disasters aren't natural isn't new. Mike Davis, Ted Steinberg and other commentators writing in Hurricane Katrina's wake have made similar points. And yet the notion of natural disasters persists, in part because it provides a convenient alibi for politicians and developers who might have prevented, or at least minimized, these catastrophes in the first place. The alibi goes like this: Nature is a fickle mistress. When she brings high winds or floods or shakes the earth, what can be done to prevent the ensuing carnage? If a disaster is natural, in other words, people are insulated from blame, the status quo protected. Fradkin isn't having it. The quake might have been unavoidable, but allowing Funston to burn San Francisco down, albeit unintentionally, was just one among many examples of government abdicating authority and contributing to the catastrophe. In the end, it's all part of a pattern in which elite San Franciscans at-

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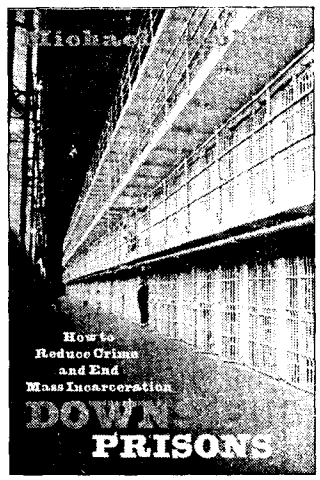
As if I had become happy: I went back. I pressed
the doorbell more than once, and waited...
(perhaps I am late. No one is opening the door, not
a groan in the hallway).
I remembered my house keys were with me, so I apologized
to myself: I forgot about you, come in.
We entered...I am the guest and the host in my house.
I looked around at all that space contains, I found
no trace of me, perhaps...perhaps I was never here. I didn't
find a simile in mirrors. I thought: Where
am I? And then screamed to awaken from hallucination,
but I couldn't...I broke like a voice rolling
over the marble. And said: So why did you return?
Then I apologized to myself: I forgot about you. Leave!
But I couldn't. I walked to the bedroom, Dream
rushed toward me and embraced me asking:
Have you changed? I said: I have changed, because dying
at home is better than being run over by a car
on my way to an empty square!

Mahmoud Darwish
Translated from the Arabic by Fady Joudah



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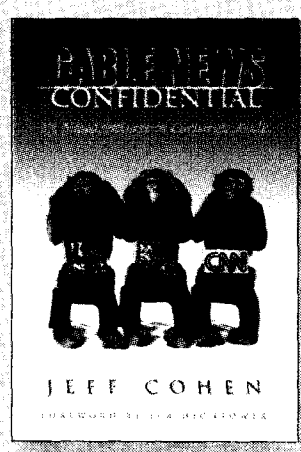

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tempted to use disaster to serve their political interests, to seize power or, in some cases, land.

For further evidence, Fradkin cites the notorious shoot-to-kill order issued by Mayor Schmitz during the crisis, and then the treatment of the city's Chinese community. As panic spread in the streets, Schmitz authorized troops patrolling the ruined city to shoot "looters." Absent martial law, did the mayor have the authority to do this? Probably not. But the courts later decided that, with so many of Funston's troops roaming the city, it was impossible to know that martial law hadn't been declared. In other words, so great was the mayhem that San Francisco had become lawless. According to Fradkin, "If there was martial law, then that meant there was no civil law; if there was civil law, then there was no martial law. In reality, there was both and neither." More troubling: how to determine whether survivors were hunting for medicine and food or, in fact, rifling through the city's ruins for easy pickings? So much of San Francisco had become a crypt that such acts were akin to grave robbing. Nobody could say with any certainty, especially not the triggermen on patrol. Fradkin suggests that the lack of clear direction gave free rein to cultural stereotypes. Police and soldiers, he notes, picked off the poor and people of color, while wealthy whites were spared.

The dispossession of San Francisco's Chinese was an even more appalling case of calamity transfigured into opportunity: for race-baiting and land grabs. First, Funston's fire brigade burned the city's vibrant Chinatown to the ground, perhaps destroying the community in order to save it. Then in the coming months, as the city consid-

SHORT TAKES

HALF OF A YELLOW SUN.

By Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Knopf. 433 pp. $24.95.

After Nigerian war planes finish raining down bombs all around her, Olanna, the heroine of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, climbs out of the bunker in her backyard in eastern Nigeria, brooding over her near-death. "If she had died...the bunker would still smell like a freshly tilled farm and the sun would still rise and the crickets would still hop around," she thinks, and is filled with a "frothy rage." This moment, like so many others in Adichie's engrossing novel, incisively explores the disjunction between history as it is experienced personally and its result: that the world will continue to trundle on its way in spite of history's injustices.

Set during the turbulent first decade of Nigeria's independence in the 1960s, which saw the country torn apart by the Biafran Civil War of 1967–70, pitting the Igbo-dominated eastern region in a bid for secession against the rest of the country, the novel vividly brings to life the political and cultural crises that beset post-independence Nigeria. Moving back and forth in time between the euphoric optimism of independence in the early '60s and the nightmarish descent into civil war in the late '60s, Adichie probes the impact of politics and war on the psyche of ordinary people as she follows the lives of Olanna; her husband, Odenigbo, a professor impassioned about the Biafran cause; Ugwu, their houseboy; and Olanna's former lover, Richard, a British writer in eastern Nigeria who is now enamored of her twin sister, Kainene.

Although Adichie's characters are ultimately powerless to control the course of events that unravel their lives, the novel is not entirely pessimistic. It is only after Kainene is exposed to the violence of the war that she chooses to forgive Olanna for the affair that she had years earlier with Richard. "There are some things that are so unforgivable," she tells Olanna, referring to the mindless death and destruction of the war, "that they make other things easily forgivable." The only consolation for the trials of history, the novel seems to say, are the human bonds that individuals forge with one another.

In its deeply insightful portrayal of one of Nigeria's most traumatic epochs, Adichie's novel affirms a different kind of historical "truth"—not the facile truth of facts, figures and dates, but the deeper truth of throbbing, lived experience. —*Fatin Abbas*

ST. LUCY'S HOME FOR GIRLS RAISED BY WOLVES.

By Karen Russell. Knopf. 226 pp. $22.

Karen Russell's stories can have a disorienting effect. In this, her first collection, child protagonists wrestle alligators, get trapped inside giant conch shells and go snorkeling for ghosts; one boy bonds with his father, who just happens to be a Minotaur. Russell loves to revel in strangeness—not only the fantastic quality of the Florida Everglades, her chosen setting, but also the weirdness of being a child in a world of bullies, parents and girl-wolves who simply refuse to act human. Readers may wish that so many of the stories (two of which originally appeared in *The New Yorker*) weren't left hanging at a point of crisis, but in a world where the voices of choirboys are expected to bring on an avalanche—every year—resolution may be one of the few impossibilities left. Russell's prose is absolutely lovely: "I rub my naked eyes and try to stargaze," a Junior Astronomer-turned-"comical-ironical-criminal" narrates. "The moon shines down its eerie calligraphy from deep space." *St. Lucy's Home* is at once preternaturally wise and guileless, its stories letters from a parallel universe, where even the gravest of circumstances have no weight. —*Christine Smallwood*

THE CITY IS A RISING TIDE.

By Rebecca Lee. Simon & Schuster. 200 pp. $21.

Rebecca Lee's beautiful first novel is a story of pasts that won't stay past. *The City Is a Rising Tide* opens with its narrator, Justine, in unrequited love with her boss, Peter, whom she has known since she was a child living in Beijing with her expat parents and he was a young man working for Richard Nixon. Their New York nonprofit, Aquinas, is dedicated to Peter's dream of building a retreat on the banks of the Yangtze River. Peter is a fellow sufferer of inconsolable longing, but the object of his affection is even farther out of reach—Su Chen, Justine's childhood nanny, who died during the Cultural Revolution. When Justine reconnects with an old boyfriend, she quietly begins siphoning money from Aquinas to help him finish a film. Lee is an elegant storyteller who gracefully interweaves her many threads and minor characters—nonprofit vultures, missionaries and assorted friends. Her themes ("Asia's in the heart!") are earnest but never sentimental. In Lee's hands, Justine's story is a poetic exploration of lives suspended between then and now, drawing strength from the very images of the past that threaten to pull them under.

—*Christine Smallwood*

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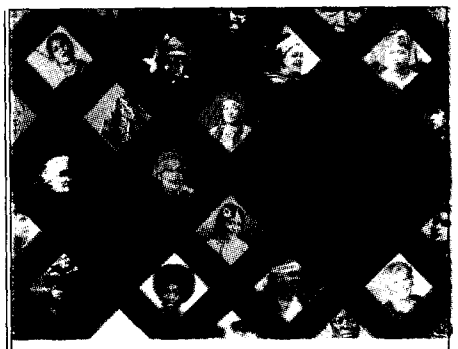
ered its reconstruction options, businessmen, led by Phelan, suggested that what had been Chinatown could be put to more "progressive" purposes. By that these elites meant redevelopment by white landlords and relocation of the bulk of the city's Chinese population. Phelan hoped his political career would rise from San Francisco's ashes. And there was no better way to curry favor with voters than to kick the Asian community while it was down. Chinese San Franciscans, many still living in refugee camps ringing the city, were outraged. Fortunately, they had more than just indignation on their side. They owned much of the land in question. And when the Empress Dowager herself intervened with President Teddy Roosevelt, the game was over. San Francisco's Chinatown ultimately resumed its position as a hub of West Coast Asian culture.

Around these two issues Smith and Winchester, whose books hew to the same basic narrative of the disaster as *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, differ with Fradkin. Smith's *San Francisco Is Burning* is a near-perfect example of a literary genre that seems to have arisen from the ruins of the World Trade Center: the cult of the first responder. Smith reveres firefighters. Soldiers and police officers too, so long as they're fighting fires. Consequently, when the fire department's Chief Sullivan fell in the line of duty, the city's fate was sealed, in Smith's eyes. Had Sullivan lived, Smith writes, he "would have, in all probability, saved the City of San Francisco." Presumably this assessment includes Chinatown, though how this would have been so is anybody's guess. The quake had cracked most of the city's water mains, leaving firefighters virtually powerless to stop the spreading blaze. As for Schmitz's execrable order, in Smith's view it was hardly surprising. After all, Schmitz wasn't a firefighter, and only firefighters can be counted on to perform in a time of crisis. This is insider's history; everything about the quake and fires is filtered through the experience of those fighting the blazes.

Winchester's view of the treatment of the city's Chinese community is far more troubling. Chinatown's destruction was regrettable, he admits. From there, though, he flirts with musty strains of colonialism still apparently lingering in parts of England's upper classes. In 1882 Congress passed the noxious Chinese Exclusion Act, bowing to anti-Asian sentiment prevalent on the West Coast. Historians still debate whether the act created a "bachelor culture" among Chinese immigrants, overwhelmingly men who came looking for economic opportunity created by the 1849 Gold Rush, which also birthed San Francisco. The 1906 fires provided a reprieve from the law. With immigration records burned, untold thousands of "paper sons," "paper daughters," "paper wives," sometimes whole "paper families," claimed legal immigrant status. Winchester depicts this turn of events, a rare instance in which the poor or people of color benefited from the quake, as its own kind of disaster: "What began after 1906 was, then, the invasion of the 'paper people.' Official America's job was now to identify any fictions and to prevent their authors from coming, settling, and establishing a beachhead in San Francisco." Why the language of war: "invasion" and "beachhead"? The Chinese apparently are the enemy army for Winchester, using the quake to mask their advance.

Just a few years ago it seemed that Winchester was becoming a hallowed literary type: the British polymath author, a gentleman generalist adept at handling any subject, from cartography to lexicography, from Asia to North America. Then he stumbled with *Krakatoa*. He has fallen here. *A Crack in the Edge of the World* is ostensibly about the 1906 quake. In fact, it's about Winchester's politics, which seem to have been nurtured in the nostalgic environs of an Oxford tutorial as the Queen's empire faded. About the shoot-to-kill order, he opines that "it is indeed quite hard to imagine anyone—no matter how well armed or endowed with authority he may be—feeling anything but the utmost reluctance to carry out a summary execution in the midst of a tragedy like this." That may be true, but only if you ignore the cultural climate in San Francisco at the time, the class antagonisms and strained race relations. Winchester does exactly that, because from his perspective the quake acted as a social leveler while having a salutary influence on San Francisco's working class. The homeless people huddled in refugee camps after the quake, he writes, "found that being compelled to live and work in the fresh air, barred from drinking hard liquor, and forced to survive on rationed food and tobacco kept them fitter and leaner than they had been for years. Hardship, to a measured degree, can be beneficial to at least some aspects of society." Ah, the stiff upper lip. If only the people left homeless by Katrina understood how lucky they are.

Politics, or priorities, if you prefer, again inflect the authors' depictions of the city's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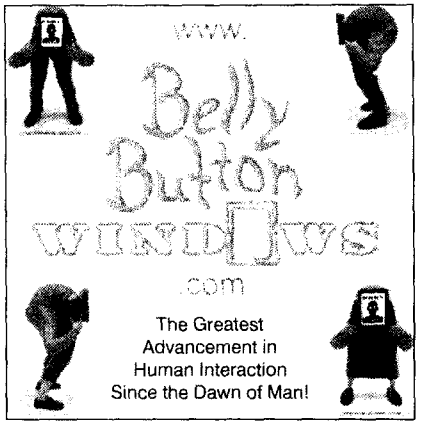

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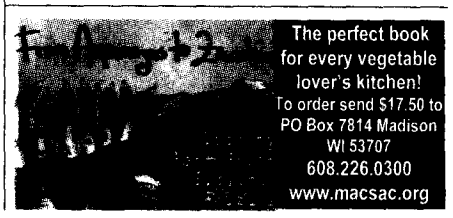
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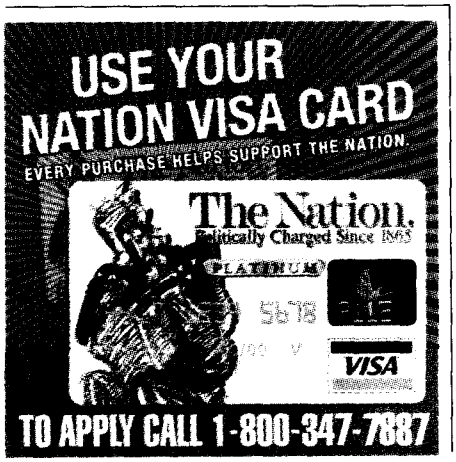

reconstruction. Smith mostly doesn't care about the rebuilding. Once the flames are extinguished, he's likely off to the next blaze, though he does express concern that San Francisco's fire department is currently underfunded. Winchester, too, rushes out of town. He's on his way north to Alaska, where he's relieved to find a lovely bistro in the wilderness. "The oysters were from Halibut Bay, the salmon was freshly caught that morning, the wine was crisp and cold, and someone was smoking Gitanes at the bar. It seemed like heaven." As for the post-quake reconstruction, it went reasonably well, in Winchester's opinion. The city rose again, a civilized island in the rough-and-tumble American West. Winchester even has friends there. For Fradkin, though, the rebuilding happened too quickly, without adequate planning and on the cheap. It was a lost opportunity to honor the quake's victims by making the city safer. The San Francisco that emerged after the disaster, battered but lovely, was a tourist town, a site of consumption instead of production. By Fradkin's lights, at least, the city had begun "its long slide toward becoming an imitation of itself for outsiders."

What all three authors agree on is that San Francisco will be destroyed again. Quite soon. If the devastation following Katrina was not just predictable but predicted, the disaster looming in San Francisco's future is even better understood. There is a 62 percent chance of another large quake centered in the Bay Area before 2032. By that time, 10 million people will be living in the region; there were fewer than half a million there in 1906. Somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000 people died in the 1906 quake, which was kind enough to arrive at an off hour. There is no simple equation to predict how many will perish next time. And yet San Francisco continues to grow, its residents every day whistling by a graveyard that may soon be theirs. It's a chilling thought, particularly as the forced calm is another legacy of the 1906 quake, when the city succeeded, for a time, in cleansing the word "earthquake" from accounts of the disaster. When the Big One comes, one expects that Fradkin will mourn the dead, who will be drawn largely from the ranks of the city's poor and working class, and bite his tongue to keep from saying, I told you so. Smith will worry for the city's firefighters, as they battle yet another huge blaze. And Winchester? If his callous book is any indication, he'll light another cigarette, call his editor and inquire about an uptick in his sales. ■

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PUZZLE NO. 3050

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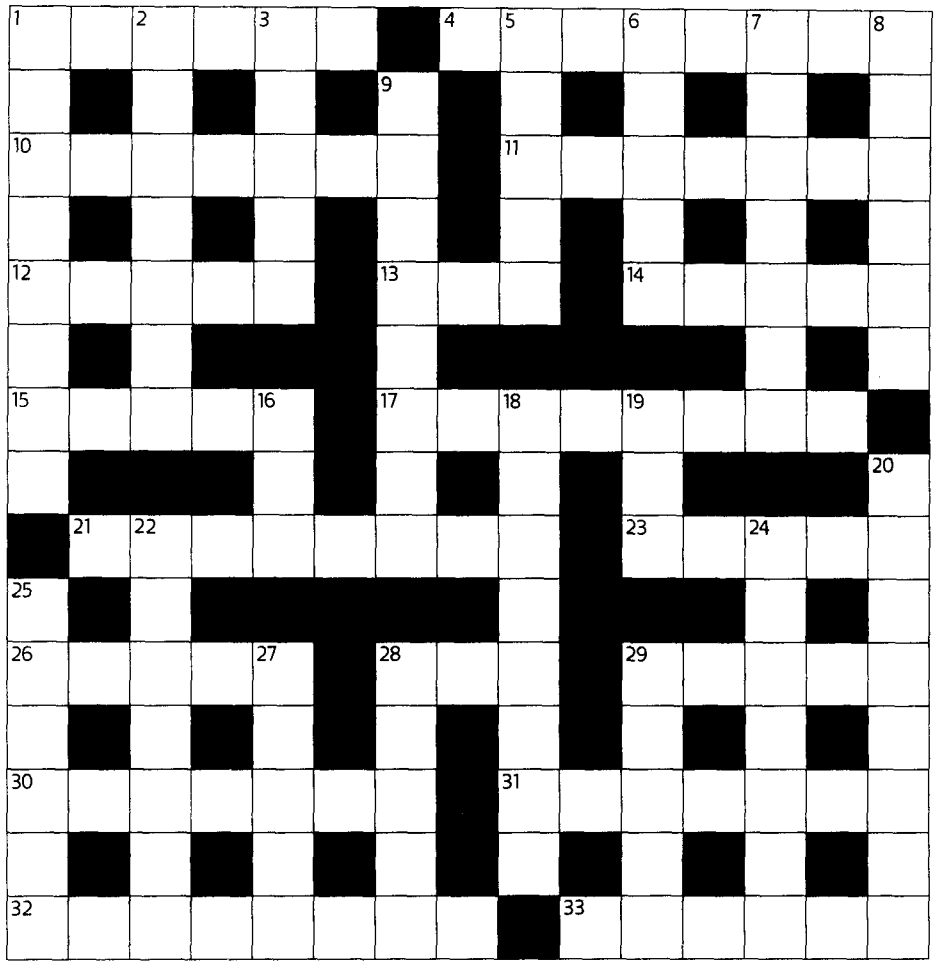

ACROSS

1 Have a bit to eat, and then work on something to furnish what you need. (6)

4 15 aplenty! (One might take a chance if one does.) (4,4)

10 One of Poe's 29 down must have looked like a yellow Volkswagen. (4,3)

11 Study the set of the sail—they aren't in agreement. (7)

12 It might describe a service of the government, and the decent thing to do! (5)

13, 19 down and **28** across It might be used on the playground, but the peculiar type is certainly not in here! (3,3,3)

14 How some of Hawthorne's 29 down were told? (5)

15 Worth changing, if you want to do it in with the towel, for quits. (5)

17 One of the first Americans made a possible cute beginning, but finally could prove a poor mesh. (8)

21 What some ask from the barber is just a quicker way to get there. (5,3)

23 Possible written in stone, like do re mi. (5)

26 A change of name (and sex) for Irene. (5)

28 See 13

29 The junction on top of part of the body. (5)

30 He wrote music of the French king, headed for the place Hansel and Gretel were to be put. (2,5)

31 People say much with this, when they are thankful. (7)

32 No longer quick? Certainly! (You're really certain, if you are!) (4,4)

33 In the last rally, you have a performance worthy of the stars! (6)

DOWN

1 "Storyville" shows a lot of mental discernment! (8)

2 A lot of loose talk about a friend, as one might swear. (7)

3 Will Abe Lincoln always have a common name there? (5)

5 How to make many past tense forms? Put two and two together! (5)

6 A belief that can be held either way. (5)

7 Drop a line where you can see a lustrous stone.(7)

8 Resist a relative change? (6)

9 One wouldn't believe how coasting would make it! (8)

16 Fighting what comes up uncooked? (3)

18 Toss a coin at it, and you'll get a police summons, possibly. (8)

19 See 13 across

20 Possibly the old shape the plant is in. (8)

22 Chosen people celebrate this. (7)

24 A well-known horse that gets pulled with deadly effect. (7)

25 The last part asleep, effectively? That's what the joint gets in the proposal. (6)

27 The singer who shook his, if it had a quiet start. (5)

28 Used car salesmen often boast of only one. (5)

29 The least disturbance, but they might be rumors. (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3049

		S	O	M	E	R	S	A	U	L	T	S		
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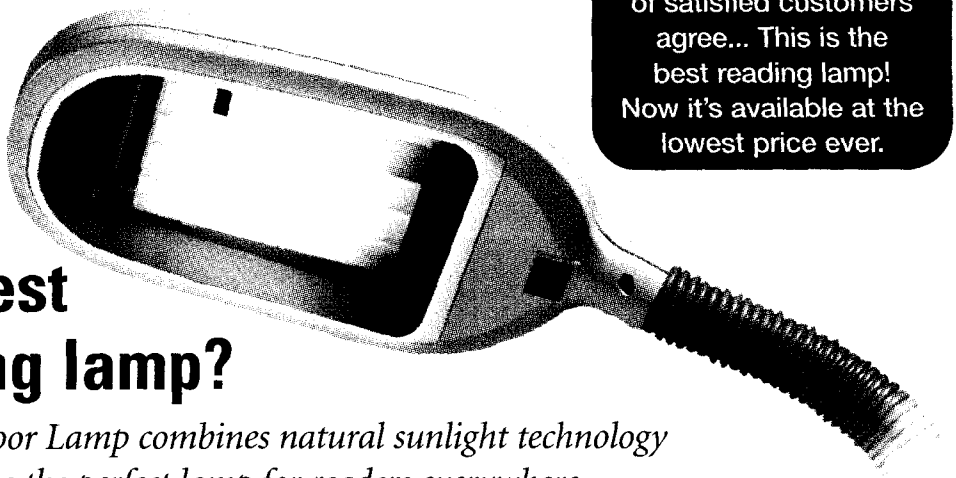

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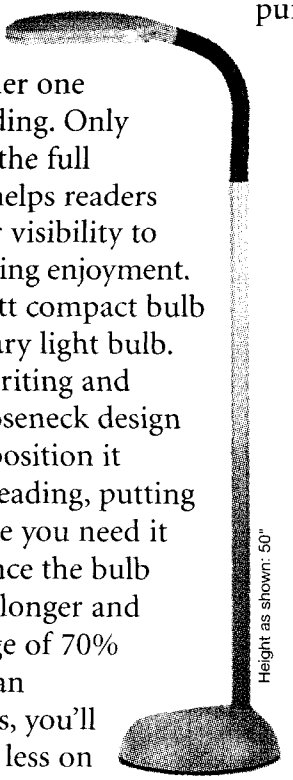

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Paul Krugman Kicked Ass.

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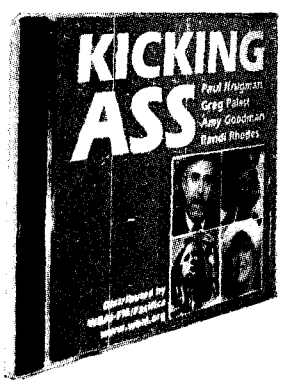
Thousands clamored to get in – but couldn't buy tickets at any price

Those lucky enough to snag seats (sold out weeks in advance) squeezed into a crowded Manhattan auditorium expecting to hear 4 icons of the left share astonishing revelations about Bush-Cheney criminal activities that were being unreported – or suppressed – by corporate media. *They were not disappointed.*

GREG PALAST, holder of the *George Orwell Courage in Journalism Award*, shared an exposé so hot, U.S. papers won't print it (it will air in the British press first). PAUL KRUGMAN, prize-winning columnist for *The New York Times*, revealed what he *wanted* to write about George Bush – but couldn't – because the *Times* deemed it a "no-no." AMY GOODMAN, award-winning host of *Democracy Now!*, proves once again (if proof were needed), that she's no lady – *she's a reporter!* As for *Air America* commentator RANDI RHODES, onlookers swear that flames were shooting out of her microphone.

Sharing a stage for the first time, Krugman, Palast, Goodman, and Rhodes kept egging each other on, slyly upping the ante in a dazzling display of sharp tongues, biting wit, shrewd political insights and shocking "leaks" that may help relocate some of Bush's top operatives from behind-the-scenes to behind-the-bars.



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